

THE ARGOSY.

DECEMBER, 1899.

THE TOWER GARDENS.

BY L. ALLDRIDGE.

CHAPTER XLV.

MAC AT MUIRHEAD.

IT seemed to Jessie Bayliss a very long interval between that Monday when she and Mac had tried to lose themselves and the following Sunday; although nothing could have been more encouraging than the daily reports of Mac's progress.

"So very successful," said Mac in each note.

Jessie sat by the window on the Sunday afternoon, waiting for him. She did not object to his seeing her there now.

"Poor Mac," she said to herself, as she looked along the empty road-way; "no one can be too kind to him now! Ah! there he is! that cab must be his."

And she ran down to the door as the cab clattered over the stony road and broke up the Sabbath stillness of the square.

There was no need for Mac to knock or ring; before he could do either, the door was opened and he had taken Jessie in his arms.

Perhaps this sudden meeting was too much for him; Jessie felt that he was trembling violently. She looked up eagerly into his face as he bent over her; he turned a little aside as if to hide something he hardly wished her to see, but there was no shrinking from him in Jessie's anxious eyes; she lifted one arm, drew his face nearer to her and kissed him.

Mac looked so much an invalid; it was that that shocked Jessie, not the patch upon his forehead.

"It has shaken you terribly, I'm afraid, dear," said Jessie, when, after a few words in the hall, they were sitting side by side near the fire in the dining-room. Lovers' ways had almost vanished under the pressure of calamity; they sat side by side near the fire as if they were old married people.

"Why, yes," replied Mac, "it was enough to shake any man; but that is only a matter of time. I feel I'm on the right road now, I'm gaining strength every hour. They are going to take me back to Birrendale with them to-morrow. I don't like going away from you, darling, because I'm afraid you will be anxious about me, but it seems the best thing to do. The Birrendale air will soon set me up again. I have a sort of longing for it. If you were only at Cauldknowe! If we could only have another drive through the dale! But that's coming, isn't it?"

He was sitting in one of John Harbuckle's great chairs; Jessie was close beside him; she noticed that his hands, which were grasping the arms of the chair, looked pale against the dark leather, and Mac's hands used to be so brown and strong.

She felt much disposed to cry when he turned his face to her with that wistful question, yet she answered him brightly:

"Of course it is coming! and it may come sooner than we think, for auntie often talks of our going to Cauldknowe."

"That would be awfully fine!" said Mac, turning to the fire and speaking without any banter. "However, whether you come or not, you will see me again very soon. I expect Donaldson will be home in a couple of months' time. I must be all right by then. I mean," he went on seriously, "while I'm at Muirhead to go in hard for political economy. My uncle has been talking to me about it. He has a good deal of local influence, you know; and if I only were not quite such a dunce as I am, he says I could be of considerable use to him when he contests Birrendale for the next election; so I suppose I shall ultimately tumble into something; and now I'm going in for real stiff work, I can tell you, with a view to fitting myself for whatever may turn up. I can work when I must, you know."

"I don't know," said Jessie. "But I should think that play would be your most profitable work at present."

"No fear of that when I'm near the Birren!" said Mac, with something like a flash of his old spirit. "Never mind, I'll be just all right when we meet next time, Jessie. Do you always see our future in Birrendale? Now, I always see it there; it always seems to me as if you could only be lodging here. When I take you home it will be, I hope, to Birrendale."

"But what would Mrs. Carruthers say?" cried Jessie.

"As she will never be asked, it will not in the least matter. Like the rest of us, she will have to submit to the inevitable. But we won't trouble ourselves about that just yet; it will come all right!"

"Yes, of course; but you must bend your giant mind to getting well again, you know."

"That is precisely what I intend to do. It will turn out all right, you'll see it will. I told you I was always the luckiest beggar in the

world! "If"—and his voice grew softer—"if I ever doubted it, Jessie, I can't doubt it now."

"Why not? Don't you think Providence has been rather hard on you?"

"No," said he, thoughtfully. "No, dear; because this trouble—and it's been an awfully great trouble too—has shown me what a dear, brave girl you are, my darling. That is worth a great deal of suffering!"

"I thought you knew that before; at any rate you used to tell me you did," said Jessie, trying to call her merry "jokesomeness" to her aid, but withal more moved by Mac's words than she dared to show.

"I did know it," he said gravely; "but not as I know it now. I think, darling, I must ask you again to forgive me that once in my life I thought it possible I could have a rival. When I think of it, it makes me feel awfully low in my own eyes."

"But not in mine," said Jessie, with that friendly little touch of hers on his hand.

"I wish they were not going to take me away from you," said Mac wrathfully; "it seems as if we were never to be together."

"So it does," asserted Jessie. "But London won't suit you now."

"I know that," said Mac, with a thoughtfulness which seemed to Jessie so unnatural to him that she could hardly believe he was the same Mac Carruthers with whom she had played at Cauldknowe.

"I know that," repeated Mac, "and I have a feeling that health and strength are waiting for me in Birrendale, so I must go and find them, because I shall want them both if I am to work for you. If it were not for that I could not tear myself away. Jessie, Birrendale, and Buoyant Health! that sounds well, doesn't it?—eh, Jessie?"

"Ay, Mac! Oh, you must go, dear! I won't ask you to stay; I wouldn't have you stay in London for anything in the world."

"I should say in three months or so I'd be quite strong again; but I'll be able to run down here again in a fortnight or so, no doubt. Donaldson will be back in about three months; but I think I'll not go out in the *Firefly* again just yet; and, indeed, he'll probably be sick of her by now. However, I suppose I had better not look any further ahead for the present. You are going to be as merry as you used to be, Jessie?" he asked. "I can't bear to think I have ever cast a cloud on your brightness. Sometimes I'm afraid I really don't deserve that you should worry about me. Do I now?"

I don't think Jessie's answer came in any form that can be put down.

But Mac had solemnly promised not to exceed that hour the doctor had allowed him, and he always kept his word.

The little clock had been going on all too rapidly; soon there was

only just time to speak to the others in the next room, to say good-bye, and to go.

"Good-bye! I'll run down as soon as I'm strong again. That won't be long; the matter of a fortnight or so. It's been most successful, you know, really wonderfully successful!" said Mac to the family assembly as he was leaving them.

With a few affectionate additions these were also Mac's last words to Jessie.

When Jessie returned from the street-door, she heard a hum of voices; but they were all silent as soon as she entered the room.

She knew they had been discussing Mac, and that her presence stopped them.

She said nothing, but quietly took up a Sunday book, and retreated to a corner of the sofa.

She went out for a walk with her father during the evening.

"Ugh!" he said, with a shudder, the moment Jessie took his arm. "Ugh! Poor fellow; that's a bad look-out, Jessie!"

"But it's most successful," put in Jessie bravely, her heart sinking the while at her father's foreboding tone.

"Ah, I've gone through it!" said Arthur Bayliss, with another shudder—"know what it is! You don't. I do!"

"You!" exclaimed Jessie. "Why, you never had anything like that!"

"No, thank God! But a man who was my constant companion for many years died of it. I saw him through, poor fellow."

"That was a long while ago," said Jessie. "They can do such wonderful things nowadays that they couldn't do then."

"So they say! Well, my dear child, of course, I don't want to depress you; but—it's a bad case, Jessie! Perhaps it is better you should be prepared for the worst."

"I won't think of that yet," said Jessie resolutely. "The doctor says it is successful. Why shouldn't we believe him?"

Arthur Bayliss shrugged his shoulders: "These cases are very rarely successful," he said.

"I believe you don't like poor Mac, father," said Jessie bitterly. It was not often she spoke bitterly, but her father's manner irritated her, and her nerves had been far too over-strung when she had left home.

"My darling child, I like him very much, *per se*," returned Arthur Bayliss, in his most amiable tone; "but you must remember that I have your interest to consider, and that when I say your interest, I mean your *real* interest."

"My real interest!" echoed Jessie, wondering what interest could be real to her that did not include Mac.

"Yes, Jessie. Remember, you are now all I have to live for in this world. I cannot afford to throw away, nor consent to your

throwing away, the best years of the life of the only being living who is precious to me."

"Throwing them away!" exclaimed Jessie, and her father could feel her hand quivering as it lay on his arm. "Throwing them away! I would sooner"—she hesitated and her breath came and went hurriedly—"I would sooner be the widow of Mac Carruthers than the wife of any other man in the world!"

"That's a very admirable sentiment, my dear, and does you infinite credit; I can imagine your poor mother would have said the same; and, indeed, Jessie, your voice sounded very much like hers as you spoke then; but, darling, this thing will have to be looked at very practically. Now don't go and jump at absurd conclusions, and suppose I want you to be hard upon the poor fellow; of course I don't want any such thing, but I want you to do what you do—and I feel that under existing circumstances I have, in a great measure, forfeited my paternal right over you—I want you to do what you do with your eyes open, that is all; I should not like you to come to me afterwards and tell me you did not know what you were undertaking. I'll tell you a little about my poor friend Warrington; I saw his case all the way through; I've seen several others since that time."

When our relatives feel it a duty to tell us what they know will give us pain they seldom shrink from performing their task thoroughly. Arthur Bayliss had acquired during his residence abroad a morbid liking for horrors; they had a kind of fascination for him; when he began to talk on a dreadful subject he could hardly check himself.

So the details of poor Warrington's case were related by Arthur Bayliss to his daughter with an elaboration that would at any time have been sufficiently trying to hear, the while Jessie and he walked arm in arm round Finsbury Circus.

Certainly Jessie would never at any time of her life have to complain that she had not been warned; that she had not had all the horrible contingencies of the position plainly set before her.

Arthur Bayliss spoke of his lost friend with a great deal of feeling. He was a man who could always command any amount of feeling, genuine, too, *au fond*.

The narrative, however, would have impressed a casual listener with more pity for Arthur Bayliss himself than for the sufferings of his friend.

In listening to Arthur Bayliss one always felt, for the moment, that no man living had gone through a quarter of such misery as he had endured.

Jessie, poor girl, was too heart-sick to think or feel anything acutely except that, come what might, she intended to be good to Mac.

"That's very shocking, father," she said, when, after they had been out more than an hour, they were again at John Harbuckle's door;

"it's awfully, awfully shocking ; but the doctors know more now, and it's been so very successful."

So very successful ! Mac's letters grew bright and then brighter. He felt comparatively strong and well again. He caught salmon and trout—he sent a fine fish to Trinity Square. "I work hard and I play hard," he wrote. "My uncle says I've a turn for politics and only require more knowledge. He and Alec are coaching me with great diligence and I am sticking to it with more than my usual pertinacity. I know the name of every voter in Birrendale, I verily believe."

So very successful ! It would be too painful to trace that triumphant assurance backwards through doubt to the certainty of disappointment.

The brightness faded away again out of Mac's letters ; they grew quiet, but hopeful ; then he dropped himself and his case out of them altogether.

Jessie remembered that anecdote she had heard her father relate to Major Merriman, about the man who was washed overboard, whom they saw carried hopelessly on the waves, further and further away from all help, drowning before their very eyes without possibility of rescue.

She thought of that scene often when she thought of Mac, but she never gave up hope for him.

And Mac himself clutched hope with a death-grip. He worked at his books and lists of voters as desperately as if he were certain the success of a long life depended upon them, and as if he were not constantly talking of the return of Donaldson of Langdyke.

"The fact is," he said to Alec, "I mean to get all Donaldson's influence for our side. He has, or ought to have, plenty of influence in the dale ; so I'll just show him the way he ought to go, and he'll go, no doubt of it, if he can do it without any trouble to himself."

"Don't be too sure," said Alec ; "there are other people to show him the way besides you."

"Yes," said Mac, "but I managed to get a hold over him that no one else ever had ; and besides that, if he has any political opinion at all it is on our side ; I'll look him up as soon as he returns. Why, it would be the making of him if he could take an interest in any mortal thing !"

"All right," said Alec, "you try ! My father has done his utmost with him ; but he says, 'What permanent impression can you make on a man whose mind is just like an india-rubber ball ?'"

"You'll see !" said Mac. "I'll do that little stroke of business for my uncle, at any rate."

"I hope you will, old fellow," returned Alec significantly, "because it would make a great deal of difference to our little plans, you know."

This conversation took place one morning at the end of July in

the gun-room at Muirhead, which was generally used by the young men as their study, and was, to their thinking, by far the most pleasant apartment in the house.

"Muirhead," Alison Bayliss once observed, and she was not a bad authority on such points, "Muirhead, like the popular hymn-book of the English Church, is ancient and modern. There is an old border tower covered with ivy, and about that tower is grouped, in picturesque, irregular fashion, a large red sandstone house, with those corner turrets in the French baronial style, with roofs exactly like extinguishers, that I so dearly love. They have large oriel windows in the old tower, and, in fact, wherever they can put them. There is a great wide staircase of pitch-pine, with fine long corridors above it. They have refurnished the whole place quite recently with the Edinburgh edition of London high art, and a very charming edition it is. The old original cattle-stealers who inhabited the tower were very pious in their way. There is a sort of crypt where the sacred monogram, I. H. S., is still to be seen in great letters. This makes Muirhead very interesting to me; that is, I used to think it was so before I fell in love with the Tower of London. You will understand, I am quite sure, that I don't think much of it now, Uncle John." For it was to John Harbuckle, as a matter of course, that Alison gave this brief description.

"But you should, my dear," returned John Harbuckle. "From what you tell me, I should judge Muirhead to be an exceedingly interesting example—an exceedingly interesting example of a border tower of to-day."

The gun-room was in the old tower.

On the morning of that July day, when Alec and Mac had the conversation about Donaldson, which was only a repetition of what they had often before said, Mac was sitting writing at the table, and Alec was reading in the oriel, when Alec looked up from his book as suddenly as it was in his slow nature to do anything, and said, with his usual drawl:

"Mac, that will be Donaldson coming up the brae; I wonder will he be at the Dryfesdales' or at Langdyke?"

CHAPTER XLVI.

OUT OF DOORS.

"DONALDSON! oh, hey!" exclaimed Mac, springing up with the greatest alacrity. "Well, he can't have lost much time in getting over here, for the *Firefly* was in the Mediterranean last week. It's kind of him to come so soon. With all his faults he was always considerate," and Mac went quickly to the window.

Muirhead stood at a good elevation above the moors around it. It was approached by a long drive that wound up the hill-side through woods of spruce and fir. Nearer the house the conifers gave place to fine specimens of those rarer trees of which the Laird was so proud.

Mac stood at the window watching Donaldson walking his horse up the ascending drive.

It was a comfort and satisfaction to him that Donaldson had sought him out so early, and poor Mac was already in that state of mind and body in which a human being craves the notice and consideration of his fellow creatures, with a kind of hunger very real and intense, although he may hardly be able to put that craving into words. When Donaldson had nearly gone round the great circular lawn, all blazing with beds of bright flowers, Mac left the window, went into the entrance-hall and down a few steps, and stood there waiting for Donaldson, who arrived in a moment or two.

"How are you, Carruthers?" "How are you, Donaldson?" exclaimed the two men simultaneously, as they shook hands with vigour.

But before either could answer each had looked into the other's face, Donaldson looking down from his horse, Mac looking up.

Mac looked up and the thought, swifter than lightning, flew through his brain:

"It's nearly all over with him!"

"Won't you come in?" he asked.

"No," said Donaldson vaguely, patting his horse, "I think I won't; I promised Dryfesdale I'd be in to lunch. I was very sorry to hear so bad an account of you, Carruthers. I thought I'd just ride over and see how you were. How are you, though?"

"As well as I'm likely to be again," returned Mac, quite evenly. "I won't ask how you are," he added to himself.

"That's bad! I'm awfully sorry. Had an attack of the nerves myself lately; haven't got a nerve left."

"Well then, you had better come in and rest," said Mac. "Rather hot on the road to-day, isn't it?"

"Yes, hot and dusty. No, thanks, I think I can't," said Donaldson uneasily; "got to be back to lunch, you see. I only came over just to ask how you were, you know. Good-bye, old fellow, good-bye," and they shook hands again. "I say, though, I'm most awfully sorry for you, Carruthers; I'm awfully sorry for both of us, that I am. Good-bye!"

"Well, if you won't come in, good-bye!" said Mac.

"I'll come over again some day, when I'm not obliged to get back so early; some day, when my nerves are stronger, when I've got the better of this attack. Good-bye again, old fellow!"

But although Donaldson grasped his hand with all the strength

that remained to him, he did not look at Mac. Neither of the men ever looked the other in the face again.

Mac stood on the steps for a few minutes, watching Donaldson as he rounded the lawn and slowly disappeared among the giant trees that hid his downward path.

He stood there on the steps beside the old border tower, where the fresh young ivy was glistening on the dark stems in the full sunshine of that July day. How brilliant was everything except his own fate! How conscious he was of its brilliancy and of his own darkness!

The warm transparent shadows of the great trees crossed each other lightly on the grass, but the shadow on his heart pressed so heavily there it seemed to be cutting it in twain.

He watched Donaldson's brown-clad figure on the bright bay horse, with its glossy coat, until it dipped beneath the hill and was lost to him. When it was out of sight he had a conviction that he should never see it more.

He could not return at once to the house; could not even pass the window where Alec was sitting, but walked quickly across the lawn and far into the depths of the fir plantation.

The sunshine and the rich life in all things followed him there, as he paced slowly over the spongy mosses among the firs.

Beyond the woods he saw the broad Solway far away and a dim land beyond the Firth, lying warm in the noontide haze.

There, below, sparkled the Birren; he looked at it steadily, and he remembered Jessie, and the happy days when they had played together, and felt that it would kill him to give her up.

Then he put his foot upon all that feeling, as he would have done on the deck of a burning ship, had duty kept him at the helm. If it did kill him to give her up, what of that? What was his life worth?

He made up his mind to his next step and walked steadily towards the house. On the lawn he met Alec, who had evidently been looking for him.

"I'm going south by the night mail," said Mac.

"Ay!" said Alec, taking the announcement slowly in.

"You'll be seeing the doctor again?" put in Alec, as Mac did not at once say any more.

"Probably," answered Mac; "but I am going to see Jessie."

They were silent for a minute or so; then Alec said:

"I'll just go along with you, Mac."

"Very well," assented Mac, with indifference.

"I'm wearying to see your Tower of London," said Alec, with a touch of *naïveté* which was, however, entirely thrown away upon his cousin.

"There'll be a row," said Mac very seriously.

"There'll be *that*," returned Alec, with a great and decisive emphasis on the "that."

"I don't want to be drawn into it," said Mac; "I've rather more than I can stand on my own account just now."

"I'll not trouble you on that score," said Alec. "I think I can manage to fight my own battles. But I am just going south with you to-night."

Alec went back to the house, and straight to his father's study.

Mac still lingered out of doors.

He had told Alec he was going south; already he had taken, he thought, the first of the final steps; this was the beginning of the end.

It was hard, too hard for words to express.

"Curse God and die!" rose up in his heart.

But he did not curse God, for out from the depths of the woods and up from the shining Birren, sung by the birds and by the soft "eye-music" of the waving boughs, came to him, clear and sweet, the full-voiced chant that had broken the silence of the London streets:

"The Lord's name be praised."

There was no response in his heart; but he turned his face bravely to do what seemed to him his duty—to give up his Jessie.

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE SITUATION DISCUSSED.

LIFE at John Harbuckle's house in Trinity Square had to all appearance, run on pretty evenly through the spring and summer, while Mac had been at Muirhead; for Jessie, poor girl, if her heart rarely quite left off aching on Mac's account, troubled no one with her anxiety. She took it all very simply and sweetly. She neither shunned speaking of him, nor, even from Alison, sought continual assurances of sympathy.

A casual observer would hardly have noticed any change in her, but change there was; Alison noticed it, John Harbuckle noticed it.

She seemed to most people as merry as ever, merrier in fact; but she had a readier ear for any tale of suffering, and a prompter hand to help.

John Harbuckle suggested that the girls should help in the Flower Mission his church carried on in the streets behind the Mint.

Jessie found great pleasure and comfort in that work. The poorest and lowest felt the strong secret hidden behind the sympathy of her bright hazel eyes.

The sorrowful knew there was sorrow there without any revealing word.

One person, however, did a vast amount of grumbling, not only at Jessie, but at poor Mac's calamity. That person was Arthur Bayliss.

He let all the household know that in his daughter's engagement to Mac Carruthers he was, under the painful circumstances, suffering a severe personal injury, not to say injustice.

If not every day, certainly three times a week, he asked Jessie for news of Mac, and invariably shrank at the answer. Alison knew very well that whenever she saw any tears in Jessie's eyes she had been talking with her father.

"I shall speak to him on the subject," said Alison, one night, with indignation.

"Pray don't! Of course he means it for kindness, and he has so many things to worry him, and his health is so very bad. He can't help it, I'm sure he can't. I'll try not to care. Don't say anything to him about it," said Jessie.

"Of course I always do what you tell me; I won't attack him, then," returned Alison.

But although she kept the letter of her promise, she may be thought, perhaps, to have broken it in the spirit, for one evening, having seen Jessie and her father off for an evening walk, she went up to John Harbuckle's den and tapped at the door.

"Come in!" said John Harbuckle; "come in, my dear, I wanted to speak to you. I was on the point of going in search of you. Have you finished another paper?"

"Not yet," said Alison gravely, and as if setting the subject altogether aside; and she looked about for a chair.

There were but two in the room; both were filled with piles of papers and curly-edged old prints.

"Wait a minute, I'll move those," said the master of the den. "I am trying to arrange them, but it's slow work, very slow work." And clearing a little space on a crowded shelf, he put the engravings up there in a somewhat disorderly heap.

"Now, my dear, there's a chair for you! I'll have one for myself directly."

The breeze from the open window gave some little trouble, but in another couple of minutes John Harbuckle was sitting opposite Alison in front of his blotting-pad, and with both hands on the arms of his chair, swaying himself gently backwards and forwards as if in deep meditation.

"Well, Alison," he began, after rather a long silence, "and what was it you have to discuss?"

"Jessie," returned Alison seriously, and somewhat uneasily.

"My subject too," said John Harbuckle, still slowly moving backwards and forwards. But neither of them appeared to be able to begin the discussion of that subject.

"I suppose you have her entire confidence?" presently said

John Harbuckle, in a vague and tentative sort of way. Not that he had any doubt about it, but that he suddenly felt embarrassed.

"I know Jessie very well indeed," said Alison; "a great deal better than I know myself; she is not such a complicated person."

"No one ever is to ourself so complicated a person as ourself," remarked John Harbuckle, with a slight smile, stopping his swaying movements for an instant.

"Jessie always appears to me so very simple-minded," said Alison.

"Would she object to giving me her full confidence likewise?" asked John Harbuckle, leaning forward with hands clasped, and looking down on to the Persian mat that formed the carpet of his lair.

"Give it you! I'm sure you have it, Uncle John," exclaimed Alison.

"Yes, I suppose I have in most things," said John Harbuckle, with a rather troubled smile; "but do you think she would like me to know exactly what her feelings are as regards that poor young fellow in the North? You see," he went on, gathering courage after a brief pause—"you see, Alison, I am very fond of Jessie; I was to have married her poor mother, you know; I have—I am very fond of you too, my dear, but you are my own kith and kin, that is quite different—I have a feeling about Jessie—that she is—her mother's child, in fact; so intimately connected with the sole romance of my prosaic, commonplace life——"

"Commonplace!" cried Alison.

"Well, well, never mind, my dear. To some minds such an affection as I had for Jessie's mother can come only once in a lifetime. Her mother is in Heaven; but—she is also—in a widely differing sense—in our Jessie here. I am not wronging anyone, I trust, when I tell you—but perhaps I ought not to say this." His voice sank, he hesitated, deeply moved.

"But do say it, please," said Alison gently; "that is, if it is not too painful."

"I cannot think I am wronging anyone—when I say—I love in our Jessie what I recognise as—Her;" and again he paused. "I am sure," he went on, fearing that he might after all have said more than he was sure he had a right to say, "you understand me, my dear, don't you?"

Alison bowed her head without looking up.

"The reason I have told you this," John Harbuckle went on, "is, that I want to know exactly what are Jessie's own feelings with regard to Mac Carruthers. I have laid bare to you—I have told you what I have never told to anyone else—I have not done so without pain, but I have done so that you might get Jessie to confide in me entirely; and that, if she wished it, I might help her. Under the

present sad circumstances, would it be a comfort to her if she married the poor young fellow?"

"Don't you think it seems very hard that if he is only to live a little while they should be separated for that little while?" asked Alison fervently. "Oh, Uncle John, she feels that very much; you will understand her; her father doesn't—or won't. You will understand that, just because poor Mac is ill and may die—I don't myself believe he will die; something tells me he will not—she wishes to be with him—while it is possible!"

"Of course she does! I was certain she did—I was certain there would be no shrinking back in her, poor darling; it has touched me very much to see her going her daily round of duty so cheerfully, when I knew how her heart must be aching. She is a brave girl, Alison."

"That she is!" responded Alison. "And now what are you going to do?" she went on, suddenly falling into a most business-like tone.

"To begin with, I must have it out with Arthur Bayliss. I should have interfered before, but his health is so precarious. I must hear what he says, when I lay before him a proposition that has been growing in my mind for some time past. Don't speak to Jessie about our little talk, my dear; I hope by to-morrow or the following day I may be able to throw—supposing I say, a little light on the subject."

"The subject being always—Jessie, I suppose!" said Alison, brightly springing up. "There now, I see you're tired of me, so I'll go and look after mother. But I tell you what it is, Uncle John, if I go on living with such very romantic people much longer, you will find me one day writing a chapter with a heading that will surprise everybody! Don't ask me what it will be about; I wouldn't tell you for worlds, dearest Uncle John!" and when she had nearly reached the door she turned suddenly and bestowed on John Harbuckle such a caress as she had not given to anyone since poor Captain James Bayliss had been asleep by the Birren water.

This conversation took place, so it happened, on the evening of that brilliant day near the end of July, on which Mac had wandered into the fir plantation of Muirhead, and he had been making up his mind that he ought to give up Jessie.

It had become an established custom for Arthur Bayliss to walk round to Trinity Square every morning directly after breakfast. On the morning following Alison's little talk with John Harbuckle, however, Arthur Bayliss did not arrive at the usual time.

"Your father is late to-day, Jessie," observed John Harbuckle, going to the window and looking along the foot-path below.

"Let us hope he is occupied with the Early Bird business," said Jessie.

"I think I'll walk round and see if he's all right," said John Harbuckle, with a thoughtfulness the sentence hardly seemed to

warrant ; but John Harbuckle had a way of saying the most commonplace things thoughtfully.

He took his hat and went off at once ; he never wore slippers.

"No, no," he had remarked, when Jessie had suggested that she should work him a pair ; "no, no, my dear, that would never do ; I always wear boots. I'm so constitutionally lazy that if I had to change slippers for boots, I should stay indoors many a time when I now go out. I must feel that I can go out at any moment the fancy takes me."

So Jessie had never worked those slippers.

John Harbuckle went round to Fenchurch Avenue, where he found Mr. Jim Robbins engaged in giving the finishing touch to the offices downstairs, and Mr. Jim's master lying on the sofa upstairs, airily attired in a loose suit of fancy chintz, a huge cup of tea on a chair beside him, and the *Times* at his feet.

"Attack ?" asked John Harbuckle.

"More dead than alive," groaned Bayliss. "Find yourself a chair."

"Fine bright day, too !" said John Harbuckle.

"All one to me," said Bayliss, turning on his elbow, and stirring his tea.

"Worse than usual ?" asked John Harbuckle.

"I don't know, I'm sure," returned Bayliss. "I'm sure to be all wrong when I've anything extra to worry about. However, this won't do ; I must get into the office, dead or alive !"

"Can I be of any assistance to you ?" asked John Harbuckle.

"Why, yes, you might call in at Tildesley's, and ask him to come on here at once ; that will save my writing a note."

"Very well, I will do so. Anything else ?"

"This will be, I expect, a very critical day with me," said Bayliss, without answering the question. "I may possibly require your advice in the evening. Can't tell how things may turn out."

"I came round to ask you when we could arrange for a little quiet conversation," said John Harbuckle ; "a little quiet talk about Jessie," he added.

"Poor darling child ! Don't mention her now ! A fine thing for me, isn't it ? Well, I must get up. Will you come here to dinner ? Will you dine with me somewhere ? Dinner will be a farce to-day for me, but one must go through the ceremony."

"No ; no, thank you. Let us have a turn in the Tower Gardens this evening."

"All right. I'll be round at your place about the usual time—that is, if I can manage it."

So they parted. John Harbuckle was by this time used to Bayliss's ways, and never hinted at home that he had thought him looking very much worse than he had ever seen him before ; but he anticipated the evening meeting with a certain nervousness almost amounting to

dread. Mrs. Bayliss and Jessie rallied him more than once on his extraordinary absence of mind during the day.

"What can have happened to you, Uncle John?" Jessie asked gaily when John Harbuckle, in looking for a circular he had left on the mantelpiece, knocked over and broke a favourite little vase. Alison thought she knew, but she did not say so.

They were finishing dessert when Arthur Bayliss arrived, in a delightful frame of mind, such as they had not observed him to be in for some time past.

"Well, dearest child," he said as he kissed his daughter, "I've had a good day—a splendid day!"

"How nice! Made your fortune and mine?"

"No, no, not quite that; but perhaps a few more such days would do it. Has Uncle John told you?—I'm going to run away with him this evening."

"I haven't mentioned it yet. The fact is, you seemed so ill this morning that I thought I might perhaps have to go round to Fenchurch Avenue again by-and-by."

"Yes, I was feeling awful first thing to-day; but, as I've often found before, there's no medicine on earth like making money. Are you ready, Harbuckle? We're going for a turn in the Tower Gardens, Mary. Jessie, my child, you're looking prettier than ever. Good-bye, all of you, *pro tem*. We'll have some more music presently, won't we?"

"Then don't stay out too late," said Jessie, wondering at her father's unusual spirits.

He patted her soft, crinkly hair fondly and gaily, and followed John Harbuckle out of the room. Mary and the girls went to the window and saw the two men walking side by side towards the Tower Gardens.

"What can they have to discuss? Something important, I'm sure," said Mary.

"And pleasant too as well as important," said Jessie, but it never struck her that she herself was to be one of the subjects under consideration.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

HIS NEW LIFE.

"AND so you've done a good stroke of business to-day?" said John Harbuckle, as he and Arthur Bayliss went along the west side of Trinity Square.

"Tildesley and I have settled matters to-day; but, as I've already told you, we've been a long while working up to it. I had an awful night; really, I thought it was all over with me! Nothing but

worry; I'm feeling a sort of reaction now. Matters stand like this," replied Bayliss, plunging at once into a long and detailed account of his financial position.

"Supposing we go down to the wharf?" suggested John Harbuckle, as they paused an instant at the gate of the Tower Gardens.

"All right," assented Bayliss hurriedly, and then immediately continued his narrative with an excitement that offered a very striking contrast to his despair of that morning.

They went down to the broad wharf that Henry III. built a great many years ago, Bayliss talking rapidly all the time.

They walked up and down there for perhaps half an hour.

The high tide had only just turned, the river was still full, many vessels were slowly dropping down with the tide towards the sea; gold shone in the western sky; the white crescent moon was slowly setting.

"The question then arises," continued Bayliss, still speaking with great rapidity, "shall it be done officially or non-officially? As for the larger firms, the whole score has, of course, been wiped off and probably no one is much the worse by this time; but there are, I fear, smaller people who may have been seriously injured by my failure."

"One such case has come under my own personal observation," said Harbuckle; "a very painful case."

"As I cannot yet pay everybody in full, perhaps, instead of the dividend I spoke of, it would be better to find out the more needy and pay them off first. What do you say?"

"I'll manage the affair for you, if you like," said John Harbuckle; "it is a kind of thing that is rather in my line. I know Liverpool pretty well; or rather, I know those who do."

"Could you? I don't care to show up there just yet, and that rather inclined me towards doing it in the regular way; but if you could spare the time it would be an immense relief to my mind—I should then feel that we were doing our utmost. You would be conferring a favour I could scarcely have asked."

"Not so very much!" said John Harbuckle. "I shall be obliged to be in Liverpool for some time shortly, I grieve to say, on account of that collision case. I will manage the affair for you."

"I begin to breathe freely once more!" exclaimed Bayliss, taking off his hat as if it oppressed him. "The cloud I've been under so long seems all but gone! Let us take a turn in the Tower Gardens." And, after a further discussion of business details, they came to the gate that faces the bonded warehouses on Tower Hill.

"I'm rather tired," said Bayliss wearily as John Harbuckle replaced the key in his pocket. "Let us sit down on that bench." And he and John Harbuckle sat down side by side under the acacias, and gazed at the walls and houses of the Tower as attentively as if they were looking at them.

"And what about your daughter?" asked Harbuckle as he assumed his favourite attitude, bending forward, with his hands between his knees.

"Ah," sighed Bayliss, "my daughter is a great trouble to me! Not, of course, the poor child herself, because she's all I could wish her to be; it's her very unsatisfactory engagement! I sha'n't be able to stand another English winter; I ought not to have braved out the last. Somewhere about November I'll go to the south of Europe. I fancy"—and he moved his right hand about with a series of little movements, as if he were drawing a picture in the air; John Harbuckle often recalled his expression, which was intently fixed on that aerial sketch, with a strange mixture of dreaminess and acuteness—"I fancy I shall be able to combine business with pleasure in a most satisfactory way. I've heard again from those people at Marseilles; there's a fine opening there for palm oil. As soon as the winter has fairly set in I shall take Jessie abroad with me; we shall no doubt be able to enjoy ourselves very well in the health resorts of the Riviera, and I shall take care to keep Jessie out of England as long as I can. I'm sorry for the poor fellow, very sorry; but it is certainly not my duty to stand by and see my daughter sacrifice herself. I object to the engagement *in toto*. Jessie, in some delightful sub-tropical place, will no doubt find that there are other——"

"I don't think so!" put in John Harbuckle with great decision.

"Oh, I don't know!" exclaimed Bayliss, his tone distinctly implying his belief in the possible fickleness of womankind.

And then he suddenly remembered that he was in the Tower Gardens.

And then John Harbuckle felt more vividly than ever—for the thought had been in his mind all the while they had been together there—that he and Arthur Bayliss were sitting under the acacias where Jessie's mother and he had talked so contentedly when Arthur Bayliss had come and stolen her heart away.

There was a long and awkward pause. At length Bayliss said, under his voice:

"I suppose we are both thinking of the same thing."

"I suppose we are," assented John Harbuckle.

"I shall never be able to thank you for all your kindness to me. That will be a debt I shall never be able to pay," said Bayliss, and there was, as John Harbuckle remembered, a something about his manner which he never could describe even to himself, but which made him at once lose the antagonism that he until then had felt for him.

"Will you try?" he asked.

"Now you are going to nail me about Jessie," exclaimed Bayliss, half laughing.

"Nail you! No! I am simply about to tell you something you

don't know. When—there is no need to shirk the memory now—when I thought I was about to marry Jessie's mother, having a small sum of money at my command, I bought a couple of houses, which have since been pulled down to make way for Queen Victoria Street. My intention was to have settled those houses on my—on Jessie's mother. As it turned out, that was a splendid investment. I have never touched that money myself, except to lay it out. When I am gone, half of it will be for my niece, Alison, half, with your permission, for your daughter, Jessie. My will was made before your return. That alone will be an ample income for her."

"Oh, I say, Harbuckle, that's coals of fire with a vengeance!" exclaimed Bayliss.

"Not at all. Hear me out. I now propose, and it will make me happy if you consent, I now propose that you should allow Jessie to take her share on her marriage; with his little income and hers they might——"

"But it isn't the money, or the want of money—that's not the question!" cried Bayliss. "I don't want my daughter to be a hospital nurse, perhaps for years and years, and then a widow! Why sacrifice her youth and beauty?"

"Why, indeed!" said John Harbuckle, with much feeling.

They were silent, there came no ready answer.

"Come, Bayliss, you, if no one else, ought to know what a woman's heart is made of," said John Harbuckle, with a sort of compelling energy.

Arthur Bayliss was silent for a moment longer, then he suddenly rose up, and looking down on his companion asked, very distinctly, holding out his hand the while: "Would this arrangement make you happy?"

The old bachelor smiled gravely.

"Then, Harbuckle, you are master of the situation."

John Harbuckle shook the proffered hand very warmly, and slowly rose up from the bench beneath the acacias, and stood by the side of Arthur Bayliss. A profound silence fell upon both.

They stood on the sloped coping, looking down into the moat. It was the same spot where John Harbuckle had stood on the night of the 7th April, when the sound of Arthur Bayliss's voice had brought back to him so vividly all the past. Then, he had stood there looking down into the rising mists; now, there were no mists, a school of boys was being drilled in that moat below. Then he had raised his eyes to a clear space between the four moonlighted turrets of the White Tower, where it seemed that heaven had opened, and gazing into that space so high and lifted up, he had asked himself, as in the sight of God:

"Do I forgive?"

Now, all that space was filled with a sunset glow, the pennants on the turrets shone like burnished gold, and he and Arthur

Bayliss, rivals so long, were standing there, side by side, friends at last.

There was a long silence. Bayliss was the first to speak.

"Harbuckle," he said, with much feeling, "I will not ask you if you forgive me, because that would be an insult to you; I know you do; but how did you learn to forgive?"

"By being myself forgiven," replied John Harbuckle gravely.

"You are a good fellow!" said Arthur Bayliss.

The last lingering remnant of enmity between the two men had vanished; each felt he had still much to say to the other, much that he could say now, that he never had been able to say before.

"I am going in, I will not be long. Will you wait for me here, or come in too?" asked John Harbuckle.

"I will wait here. It is a pleasant evening. I will stroll about until you return. You won't be longer than is absolutely necessary?"

"No. I have only to put up Alison's manuscript for Woolcomb; she had not finished it when we left home."

They went down together to the gate opposite the bonded warehouses.

John Harbuckle paused there and looked up Tower Hill.

"How often," he said, almost as if to himself, "how often, on such an evening as this, have I stood here and imagined this place as one sees it represented in old prints! How often have I seen all that hill crowded with rabble, great balconies full of people, all come to see 'one small head taken off,' as Lord Lovat said. There," pointing to All Hallows', "there is the same brick tower and the same belfry that always, in the prints, overlooks that crowd. But I think"—and he turned to his companion with an affectionate expression which had in it something that Bayliss had never seen in John Harbuckle's face before—"the incident that has most deeply impressed itself upon my mind is old Cardinal Fisher walking calmly up this hill to the scaffold, repeating over and over again: 'This is life eternal, to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.' Think of that, Bayliss, when I am gone."

He unlocked the gate, put the key into his pocket, and turned away with a gravely happy face, and a quiet blissfulness in his heart.

Arthur Bayliss stood by the gate for some minutes watching him as, with bowed head and hands clasped behind him, John Harbuckle slowly plodded up the hill towards his home.

Bayliss watched him until he could see him no more; and then he thought of the Cardinal and his last words.

"This is life eternal," he repeated, or rather the words repeated themselves over and over again in his heart, as he turned from the hill and the gate, and began pacing the broad straight path of the Tower Gardens above the moat. "This is life eternal! This is life eternal!"

If anyone could have looked into John Harbuckle's face as he slowly went up Tower Hill, he would have found it full of love and tenderness; the last words of the Cardinal's text—the Name—was in his heart, and along with it the great up-lifting secret of Forgiveness. At that moment John Harbuckle would not have felt it at all hard to lay down his life for Arthur Bayliss.

Hardly seeing the material world around him, that dear familiar world he loved so well, John Harbuckle came to his own door, and there he saw a sight that brought him back to Trinity Square in a moment. His niece, Alison, was just coming down the steps, and with her was a young man, no less important a person than Alec Carruthers; a stranger, of course, to John Harbuckle.

"Oh, Uncle John!" exclaimed Alison brightly—she was looking a great deal prettier than John Harbuckle had ever seen her look before—"make haste upstairs, Uncle John, for Jessie and Mac have some fine news to tell you. This is Mac's cousin, Mr. Alexander Carruthers, and you will be pleased to know he takes a great interest in antiquities. So I'm just going to show him that piece of old London Wall that is still left on the other side of the Square."

"That's right; it may be gone directly," said John Harbuckle. "I hope your cousin is better, Mr. Carruthers. We have all been very deeply concerned about him."

"He's seen another man, a most eminent man, and he said at once '*Wrong diagnosis.*' It is not the awful thing we thought it was. There's just a bit of injured bone left, that's all. Thank God!" cried Alec.

"That is a great relief to my mind," said John Harbuckle.

"And to mine," said Alec Carruthers. "We ought to have gone to this man at first."

"I came in to put up your manuscript for my friend Woolcomb, Alison," remarked Uncle John.

"Oh, thank you! you'll find it on your study desk; I've just put it there," said Alison, who, however, never made the slightest attempt to return, in order to see the precious document safely posted.

"Well, good-bye for the present," said John Harbuckle. "Alison, do not forget to impress upon Mr. Carruthers that this is undoubtedly the finest square in"—("Europe," he was about to say, but he checked himself)—"that is—South of Carlisle."

They all laughed. John Harbuckle withdrew into his own house. Mary Bayliss, standing by one of the windows in the dining-room, watched Alec and Alison pass together along the fine piece of wide pavement in front of the Trinity House; and she thought of Mrs. Carruthers of Muirhead with very great satisfaction indeed.

John Harbuckle's footstep was not light; Jessie heard it, although she and Mac were so deeply engrossed in conversation.

She flew to the drawing-room door.

"Oh, Uncle John, come in!—come in!" she exclaimed. "We're

just both of us mad with delight! He's seen another doctor, who's going to make him just as well as ever!"

"My dear child! My dear fellow!" exclaimed John Harbuckle, seizing the hands of both; for Mac had come forward directly after Jessie.

"He's confident; he says there's no possible doubt but it will be all right again," said Mac; "I'd given up all hope; I don't mind telling you now, that I was coming here to say so, when, on the Carlisle platform, we met a man whom we hadn't seen for a long while. He was coming south; so we all went along together. He was awfully sorry for me; but he said: 'Look here, old fellow, don't lose heart; my brother was just in your case a couple of years ago, and there's nothing but a slight scar left now.' So he told me all about the man his brother went to, and I've been to him to-day, and he says he will stake his whole reputation upon making a cure of it. I feel as if that man's words had put fresh life in me! I don't think I ever felt before what a glorious thing life is! It was so fine to be able to tell Jessie I was going to live! Wasn't it, Jessie? I can't tell what those words 'Wrong diagnosis' sounded like!"

This sort of thing was too much for John Harbuckle. Mac had thrown his arm round Jessie, and she was clinging to him in a tumult of the wildest excitement. As for Mac—as for both of them, anyone could tell they had been crying.

"Well, well, well," said the old bachelor; "I'm very thankful, very thankful! You will not be leaving in a hurry, I suppose? Come up to my den before you go. I've something to tell you that may interest you both; but I know you can't spare any time just now. Let us say half-past nine; fare you well, for the present."

John Harbuckle was a long while packing up Alison's manuscript; he fell into a train of thoughts that he could not easily control:

"A dear girl, a dear girl, worthy to be her mother's daughter!" he said. "I trust their hope will be realised; with all my heart I trust so; but I shall miss her! Well, what of that? Nothing—nothing! Only—she is Jessie, and I shall miss her. Well, I must go and tell Bayliss!"

At last, after many delays, Alison's manuscript was put up and addressed. John Harbuckle went downstairs and out of the house without disturbing anyone. He posted the paper. He turned towards the gate by which he had parted from Arthur Bayliss, he presently opened it and again entered the Tower Gardens.

He went to the bench under the acacias; Bayliss was not there.

He passed the dark Beauchamp Tower and the houses that face the green; the windows were all sombre now, they and the pennants on the White Tower had ceased to flame in the sunset. The gold had died out of the sky—the dove's wing was deepening into that sweet transparent grey that precedes the raven's twilight. The boys had left the moat, even the soldier and the lass were gone now. The

look-out of the Bell Tower at the corner, hanging against the sky like a great bird-cage, guarded a quiet solitude.

John Harbuckle, thinking of the good news he had to tell, walked along the path less slowly than usual; but Arthur Bayliss was not to be seen anywhere about. John Harbuckle looked in at the summer-house opposite the Devereux Tower; the ash-tree, like a fan, was spreading over its roof, but no one was there; the sentry, pacing above the opposite bastion, within which a light glowed like a furnace, was the only living being to be seen in front of it; behind it, the stream of life and traffic was ebbing away to its evening rest along the public road above. John Harbuckle went on; he passed the new barracks, lighted up here and there, and the gloomy old prison lodgings that guarded them; but he saw no other creature anywhere.

"Can he have left the gardens? Hardly, I think, except to return to us; and yet I was a long while; he may have grown tired of waiting."

He came to the little ascending turning where Mac and Jessie had stood when Mac had wished to go along that path under the shadow of the dock warehouses, that ends in a little wilderness in which is a grave.

That was where he himself had first seen Arthur Bayliss. He looked along the path; no one was there now.

He went up the little ascending turning within a stone's throw of the spot where he had heard the voice on the 7th of April.

"He may be in the arbour," he thought. "It is late, though, for him to be there."

He came near to that rustic arbour so screened from the broad roadway by elder-bushes that, but for the never-ceasing hum of the great City, one might feel oneself far away in the rural provinces. He came near—the very streets seemed lulled to quiet that still evening—he came near—he saw Arthur Bayliss.

He hastened his steps; his heart hurried its beat.

He went nearer—what was there in that quiet form that struck John Harbuckle so cold?

He came close to him. He touched the hand; he felt for the heart—his own stood still—he knew that other man was dead.

There were months of mourning; but through them, as they passed by, hope grew stronger day by day, until it became a happy certainty. The eminent specialist was right. Mac recovered quickly and permanently, and nothing but a slight scar remained to tell the tale of what he had gone through.

After so heavy a storm at last the skies cleared for Mac and Jessie. Cauldknowe became tenantless; Mrs. Bayliss felt that it would be an ideal home for a young couple who loved Birrendale; and the Muirhead people thought the same, for Mac had made himself of much value in the dale, and everyone was delighted at the

prospect of having him and the well-remembered Jessie as permanent residents there.

So the wedding was at last arranged and the day drew near. It was quite pretty to see Jessie's interest in her trousseau; the evident though subdued pleasure she took in examining each gown and article of finery as it arrived from the milliner's. These events were perhaps the most stirring incidents in that quiet household, over which there still hung the inevitable shadow of past sorrows.

Meanwhile around the Tower of London change—writ large—was in the air. A Great New Bridge was coming; every approach was to be broadened, and even the Tower Gardens themselves, the luxury of the Few, prepared for the Many.

"I await the transition with deep interest, but not without fear," said John Harbuckle, as he watched the first batch of navvies arrive a few days before the carriage came to take him and Jessie to St. Olave's, where he was to give her away.

"But don't imagine you are going to get rid of me," said Jessie under her voice, as they drove off. "No, Uncle John—the dearest old Uncle John there ever was in this world—never, never!"

Go into the beautiful St. Olave's on a bright day, when every bit of colour tells, and you will understand how charming were the surroundings of Jessie's wedding—how sweetly her fresh young beauty and her bridal white contrasted with the dark oak carving and the age-toned tomb on which the two Aldermanic brothers kneel for ever in their ruffs and vermilion gowns, and where Mrs. Pepys bends over from above as if she still took a vivid interest in such affairs.

Alison looked up at Mrs. Pepys, as she left the quaint vestry, and remarked to Alec, with much feeling:

"She never looked down on anything lovelier!"

"Ay," assented Alec—"ay!"

All that day Alec wanted to say many things to Alison, but, as he would himself have put it:

"I just couldn't get out of my prison;" for he was shy, intensely, painfully shy—and so was Alison. Therefore complications ensued. But time brought them all to a happy conclusion, and we have visions of a new Birrendale, where Alec and Alison rule and reign.

When it was all over, John Harbuckle took another turn in the Tower Gardens, and, as on the night of the 7th of April, again from the old fortress and its mighty bastions, there came back to him, re-echoed from all around, the one word:

"Jessie!"

THE END.

A CHRISTMAS CARD.

TO THE ARMY IN SOUTH AFRICA.

BRAVE friends, though all unknown,
Who still have dearer grown
With every danger you are braving now!
May this sweet Christmas bring
Blest healing on its wing,
And lighten suffering—
As God alone knows how!

While England holds her breath
To hear the roll of death,
That sounds the knell of her devoted men,
All else seems little worth:
Beside the Saviour's birth
She sighs for "Peace on earth"—
Though God alone knows when.

Yet still, our brave and true,
Whene'er we think of you
Shall hope and trust make strong the wings of prayer!
Heav'n's mercy we entreat,
That you, whom thus we greet,
With those you love may meet—
But God alone knows where!

ANNA H. DRURY.

IN ARGENTINA.

"TIRED?" said Jack interrogatively. "A little homesick, eh? Have known the feeling myself."

His long frame lounged up against the post of the verandah, his idle fingers toyed with her work.

Miss Tidman rescued it before she answered; then she spoke reproachfully.

"You need not spoil the few flowers we have left; that creeper will be utterly ruined if you crush it in that way."

He removed his offending limbs and came to sit down on a packing-case by her side.

"Where have those beautiful sunflowers gone?" he asked suddenly.

"Locusts," was Miss Tidman's brief reply.

"Now, that is a pity," went on Jack sympathetically, "for they were beauties."

"They were even finer than any we have at home; and the seed came from mother's garden," said Miss Tidman, growing eloquent under his sympathy. "I never saw such a horrid country as this is for creatures eating up your things; it is of no use trying to do anything."

She laughed hysterically, to hide the tears in her eyes. It would be horrid if this man were to see them! Jack's were bent on the ground, however; the sleepy lashes never seemed to lift up.

"Plant some more," he said laconically; "they grow fast enough here."

"But that isn't the same thing," said Miss Tidman irritably. She was out of spirits with herself and everything else this afternoon. The heat tried her, and the flies; and Jack was particularly dense. He always suggested putting in something fresh and beginning again just when one was feeling specially sore at some pet thing failing. He did not seem really to have any feeling. And then, his indolence aggravated her! Of course she knew he could break in horses as well as a native, but that is not everything. And—well, his land, somehow, always looked better than anyone else's. But on the other hand, whenever he came to see them, he would always lounge about in that particularly aggravating manner, as if he did not know what to do with his long limbs. It was disgusting to see a man so lazy!

Miss Tidman decided that she had had enough of it for one day, so, gathering up her work, she went into the house. Jack looked after her with a curious smile; then he slowly lounged away.

Miss Tidman went in and looked at her home photographs, and had a little cry. How lovely everything would be looking at home just now! Mother would just be sitting down to her work, while perhaps Violet was reading aloud. And the boys would soon be home from school, clamorous for their tea, and—— Miss Tidman's tears were enough to wash any picture away.

She had come out, feeling so brave and helpful. There was to be no more anxiety about her own health, which was to become quite strong directly, in the beautiful climate—for had not Birdie written home to say that two years had wrought wonders in *her*?—and she meant to send home all sorts of unexpected remittances, to make mother smile, and meet that horrible list of "extras" which the boys declared to be absolute necessities in their school bills. But at present she did not feel much better, and had only been able to send home one tiny present as the result of much scraping and pinching.

She had counted upon getting quite a good-sized little school round her. People would surely be glad to have their children taught by an Englishwoman out there. But they did not evince any strong craving for knowledge. Five little scholars, who came or stayed away at their own sweet will, formed her only class at present. One or two "young ladies" were glad to have music lessons once a week at their respective homes, but they were neither promising nor remunerative.

And Miss Tidman had not been prepared for the lonely rides between which the lessons were sandwiched. She carefully conquered her fears when she found riding indispensable to her work, and mounted the steed which Birdie assured her was as quiet as "an old cow"; but the horrors only began then. It had been quite a different thing jogging along a quiet country lane, with a groom at a respectful distance, to these mad gallops over trackless plains, or through dense forest.

Unknown terrors surrounded her on all sides; she peopled the jungle with fauna which had never trodden its hidden paths. It was fortunate that her scholars could not read the geographical lapses which fear planted in her mind. Tigers were added to the list with an unscrupulousness of which a teacher ought to be ashamed. Lions even once faintly loomed in the distance. But the most real danger of all were the Gauchos, those fierce men who might fall on her at any moment from out the long grass in the sudden darkness, which fell with no friendly twilight warning. Even Birdie looked grave over this, and counselled being home in good time. For herself, Birdie never had any fears.

Only last week, when she and Kate came home from a drive, they had found their two peons just beginning a fight with knife and pistol, and calmly put them asunder, keeping them apart until they were cool enough to listen to a justly merited lecture. Miss Tidman

shuddered at the thought of what might have happened if the knife had turned another way.

"Only they would never dare to kill an Englishwoman in her own house," said Birdie, with cheerful carelessness.

Birdie had always been half a boy; even her mother declared there must be some mistake in her composition! When the crash came which took away their pretty house and the horses, Birdie turned her energies to hospital nursing, and attended operations with the same cool head with which she assisted the boys to bind up the terrier's broken leg, and sew up his ear after that fight with the bull-dog.

Now and again a matron had to remonstrate at some special unconventionality, such as suggesting to another nurse to race two convalescents up and down the verandah in their respective bath-chairs—which, by the way, the patients were thoroughly enjoying; but otherwise she got on capitally, and managed to earn for herself hosts of testimonials and certificates.

Then she grew overworked, and she and another nurse, Kate Lawson, agreed to try their fortunes in the Argentine. Everybody said it was a preposterous idea, not only at home, but when they arrived. Two English girls to set up farming by themselves was an unheard-of absurdity. But it became a fact. Their bungalow was now their own. They had cows and horses, pigs and poultry: they quite paid their way with butter sold in the town every week.

When Birdie heard that her sister was flagging over her governess' work at home, she wrote:

"Come out here, and you will soon grow as fat as I am."

But at present Miss Tidman had not fulfilled the prophecy.

"You really are disgracefully skinny," was Birdie's plain-spoken verdict, breaking in on her reverie, "now, do put that work away and come and help me churn; there is nothing like it for developing the muscles."

Then she saw that her sister had been crying.

"What is the matter?" she asked kindly.

"Nothing," affirmed Miss Tidman resolutely, and then tried to tuck up her sleeves in imitation of Birdie's.

"We left you alone longer than I intended," went on the latter penitently, "but I thought Jack was here and would amuse you."

"I don't like him," said Miss Tidman.

"Oh, he is not half bad," remonstrated Birdie; "he has been very good and kind to us ever since we came out."

And in her heart she thought her sister rather hard. But then Birdie also knew that there had been an episode in Miss Tidman's life which was one of the things which ended with the pretty house, and wherein the other person had married a girl more gifted with this world's goods. She did not altogether regret this circumstance

herself, because she had never considered him good enough for her sister, but she knew that henceforth life and mankind would present a different appearance to Miss Tidman.

That is the worst, or the best, of it. We never get rid of the past. It upbraids us, or it comforts. It leaves stinging reproaches or tender memories. Perhaps we are better men and women for them both.

The three girls churned butter and waxed hotter over the process. But they grew merry too. Frequent bursts of laughter broke the silence. Miss Tidman determined not to be so foolish and homesick again.

Next day there was a paper chase, with a picnic at the end. The former was very exciting. Even the little governess found the blood dancing in her veins as they raced along on their swift little horses through grass and underwood. The native who acted as hare entered into the game with a zest which was infectious. He led them here, there and everywhere: over running water, up many a *cul-de-sac*, through jungle so dense that they almost lost each other. But they were a large party and kept together, and no one had time to feel lonely or frightened. Once, though, a branch struck Kate across the chest, and threw her. For a minute she was dragged, till Jack's strong hand had caught the horse. Birdie was off her saddle like lightning and down on the ground by her friend. In the Colonies people do not waste time in hysterics or fainting. Water and handkerchiefs were forthcoming almost before asked for: an inpromptu bandage bound round the cut forehead; and Kate was on her horse again, pale and shaken, but calling forth a universal murmur of admiration for the "plucky English girl." She finished the chase, too, and kept her splitting headache in the background till they returned to the bungalow.

After that Miss Tidman had quite a run of luck. No less than four different girls evinced a sudden desire to learn French. As they all lived at some distance, she projected the bold plan of opening a class for them at her own house twice a week. It would be such a saving of time; such a saving, too, of those terrible rides, though on this she tried conscientiously not to dwell; and, moreover, competition was such an incentive to progress.

She grew quite excited over the idea, and spent much time over the adornment of the little room.

"Looks quite spick and span," was Jack's verdict, as he lounged up in the afternoon.

Miss Tidman was surveying her handiwork with pride, a flush on her cheek, a light in her eyes. She looked excessively pretty; animation was becoming to her. The tiled floor was spotless; the art muslin curtains might be of the cheapest, but they were bright some of her own pictures covered bare places on the whitewashed walls. And flowers everywhere.

"Can't think what you women do to a room," said Jack; "it always looks different directly you have touched it."

"I wish you could see our drawing-room at home; it *is* pretty," said Miss Tidman, in a sudden outburst of pardonable pride.

"Oh, this is good enough for my taste," said Jack shortly. "Never could see the use of longing for what you have not got; and, after all, perhaps it is only distance which makes one fancy everything at home perfect."

"He really seems to have lost all love for England and everything English: that is the worst of men; they so soon forget home when once they get out to the Colonies."

Miss Tidman spoke crossly. She had a feeling, somehow, of having been rebuked, and she did not like being brought to task by this man. It was not his business, and she would certainly continue to think home best all her life. She said as much to Birdie.

The girls were in the verandah, lying back in various attitudes in their low deck chairs. It was Sunday morning, and in honour of the day they had all donned white blouses, and looked wonderfully fresh and English, in spite of their tropical surroundings.

"I am not sure," said Birdie slowly, "I am not sure about Jack not caring. You know he did not come out here to please himself. His whole heart was set on the army, but there was a younger brother who wanted it too, and there was not enough money for both, so Jack gave it up. And he really is a very good fellow, Bess. I wish you would try to like him better."

"It is not my way to rush into friendships," returned Miss Tidman obstinately, "and I cannot make out why you call him by his Christian name; it is so horribly familiar, and——"

"Dear little Miss Prim," interrupted Birdie, "you must have had a very bad night to be so cross this morning. No one out here knows Jack by anything but that name; and we have never called him Mr. Wyndham since the first week we came out. He is never familiar."

"Time for service," sounded Kate's voice from the depths of her chair.

They held it every Sunday morning—the nearest church being eighty miles away. Birdie conducted it after a fashion of her own. She was always clergyman by tacit consent. One of her numerous childish vagaries had been to mimic sundry rectors and choir-boys for the benefit of a nursery audience. Her sermons were among the family relics. Some of the same spirit echoed in the voice with which she now read psalms and lessons. Her favourite choir-boy intonations crept into the hymns.

Perhaps it was this subtle influence of association which stole over Miss Tidman's troubled soul and calmed it. She felt soothed and happy again; at peace with all mankind, even Jack. Perhaps he

was not so bad after all; she would really try to like him. Birdie was generally pretty accurate in her surmises; and she had found good in him. Only, suppose—Birdie certainly had defended him quite warmly for her, as she was not generally given to praising the male sex. Suppose she was growing fond of Jack! The idea almost took the elder sister's breath away. Would mother mind very much if Birdie married a "Colonial?" But then, on the other hand, she would have someone to take care of her, and would not have to work so hard. Mother would like that.

Miss Tidman went off in a day-dream, wherein Birdie was mistress of a bungalow covered with flowers; while a benevolent elder sister, with no ties of her own, acted the part of good angel to the many little olive branches round the table. She made their clothes and taught them, and even watched them grow old enough to whisper love stories of their own into her kindly ear.

Miss Tidman's thoughts wandered disgracefully during that last hymn. She hardly even knew when it came to an end.

But someone else did. Jack came out from the orchard where he had been lying among the long grass.

"It sounded so pretty, all your voices out of doors," he said.

Once or twice before Miss Tidman's arrival Jack had joined the impromptu service.

"You can come if you like," was Birdie's characteristic invitation, and he had accepted it in the same spirit of *bonne camaraderie*. Some instinct had kept him away lately.

"I came to tell you," he said, "that I heard yesterday your two lost horses are all right. They have made their way back to their old estancia. It is wonderful how far animals will travel; that must be at least two hundred miles."

"All the animals are wonderful out here," laughed Kate. "Last night the cows had been eating alfalfa again, and we had to run round sticking them as fast as we could, or they would have died. It is most tiring work. I really hated them, and felt most exhausted to-day."

Miss Tidman shivered a little at the remembrance of the work.

"We are going to have rather a nicer dinner than usual to-day, as we killed two chickens last night," remarked Birdie. "You can stay and share it if you like, Jack, and write your letters for the mail afterwards. Everyone writes letters on Sunday afternoons, and there are lots of pens and paper about." She waved her hand hospitably round.

So Jack stayed, and they all wrote letters and had a *siesta*. Even the green parrots ceased their chattering, and dozed through the hot afternoon. It was like the land of the lotus-eaters. Miss Tidman folded up her last mail packet and laid it down. Jack glanced carelessly at the address.

"You write for the papers?" he said interrogatively.

Miss Tidman flushed and involuntarily drew the blotting-paper over it.

"I was only trying whether an account of our life out here would do for a magazine," she said stiffly. "Sometimes they like an article about something fresh."

"Ah!" said Jack. "Wonderfully hard-hearted lot are editors! Thought I would try the literary line once myself, but it was no go; all my things came back. But I have found out why. I was talking to an editor chap the other day, a Yankee, always successful."

"Yes?" queried Miss Tidman, interested in spite of herself, for her literary efforts were very dear to her, "and he said?"

"He said that I did not put enough energy into it," responded Jack cheerfully. "You see," he continued, waxing eloquent as he saw she was listening attentively, "it is just like everything else; you cannot do any good at writing unless you put your whole heart into it. As he said to me—suppose you choose your subject, give it a name. What shall we call it—Eliza? Well, you are going to write about Eliza. For the next few days or weeks, or which ever it is, you must never let Eliza out of your thoughts. You must think Eliza, dream Eliza, eat Eliza, become perfectly saturated with Eliza before you can do any good with her. Then you go ahead and write like fun."

There was a pause. Miss Tidman got up and went indoors, murmuring something about tea.

Saturated with Eliza! How coarse, how disgustingly vulgar this man was in his mode of expression! Why need he have chosen her name to illustrate his horrible theories? He must have known it was hers. She disliked it herself, and at home was always called Bessie. How could he do it? Her cheeks burned hotly. Tears of mortification were in her eyes. The day had been so happy until now, when he spoilt it all. How she wished she had never left home!

"Eliza, you are upsetting that kettle instead of putting it on the fire!"

It was Birdie's voice which interrupted her indignation, and Birdie's eyes had tears in them of another kind to her own. She had been laughing till she cried. Even now she was rippling over with merriment, while suspicious drops twinkled on her lashes.

"It is all very well for you to laugh," broke out Miss Tidman in ruffled pride, "but I call it positively insulting."

And then the incorrigible Birdie laughed again.

"Dear old Bess," she said, "if you only knew how contrite he is; he never thought——"

"He ought to have thought," said Miss Tidman.

Jack's voice came to her laughing and talking with Kate in the verandah. It did not sound like being sorry. She hardened her heart.

For the next few days she avoided Jack altogether. His appear-

ance was the signal for her immediately finding pressing work elsewhere. Her new duties were a great interest, but they also involved difficulties. The four pupils were of an age and class who considered that they conferred a favour upon her by learning. Superior wealth made them arrogant where they should have been submissive. They evinced far more interest in the furniture of the room than in the acquirement of the French language.

But Miss Tidman was patient. Teaching was her forte, and she was not going to be vanquished by the vagaries of a few school-girls. She was also subtle. Experience had long ago taught her that to render things pleasant to people it is necessary to make them as attractive as possible. So after two or three weeks she determined to inaugurate a tea-party. They should at least see what the bungalow could do in the way of festivities. Birdie and Kate entered into the plan with alacrity. A whole day was devoted to the manufacture of buns, cakes and scones.

Not only the four pupils were invited, but a few other guests. A cousin of Kate's, who had a farm up country, a pleasant old Scotchman and his wife, who had tried Argentina for thirty years, and of course Jack. On this latter guest both Birdie and Kate were unanimous in insisting. Miss Tidman had to acquiesce gracefully. But she was too well satisfied to wish to argue over trifles. Everything had really gone so beautifully. The bungalow was a credit to its owners. Never had the little sitting-room looked so pretty. Fresh curtains at the windows, flowers in impromptu pots and vases filling up every vacant space, and making a bower of sweetness and colour.

The table groaning under every form of home-made delicacy, cakes and scones peeping from out wreaths of many-tinted foliage, golden butter almost hidden by greenery; brown rolls and jam to tempt the appetites which might fancy variety. Miss Tidman surveyed the feast with pardonable pride.

"I wish mother could see it," was her only regret as she sped away to put the finishing touches to her own toilette.

It was Birdie who paused in the operation of fastening a waistbelt to say:

"I am sure there is someone moving in the next room," and she opened the door to see.

It was the proverbial slip betwixt the cup and lip. Of the endless forms it takes there seems no end. In this case it was pigs. They had always been tiresome, and their vagaries changed with each succeeding day. Running about at their own sweet will, they occasionally came into the house and had to be driven out. They seemed to possess the nose of the keenest retriever for discovering the whereabouts of their store of food. Only ten days ago Birdie had had to take a bag of maize into her bedroom as a final hiding-place. And they found it!

Lying in bed one morning, she had heard the warning patter of

burglarious feet, and looked up in time to see two four-footed thieves in the full enjoyment of newly-recovered spoils. To see with Birdie was to act; and such flagrant transgression must be punished. She took the loaded pistol which always lay by her pillow, and aimed at the back leg of the nearest thief. A prolonged squeal as they scuttled away showed that her chastisement had not been without effect. And when, the following week, the thief, after thoroughly enjoying life without any apparent inconvenience from his wound, was converted into bacon, a bullet in the finest ham proved that Birdie's aim was tolerably accurate.

Miss Tidman had exclaimed against the severity of the correction; now she changed her mind with vicious celerity.

"I should like to shoot the lot," she cried.

Her wrath was pardonable. Of the beautiful feast there remained but the barest fragments. Plates, broken vases and flowers strewn the floor. With its two front feet on the table, a large grey pig was hastily finishing the little which remained. It seemed incredible that so much had disappeared in so brief a space of time, but the rate at which the brute was gobbling afforded sufficient explanation.

For one moment the girls surveyed the scene in dismayed silence. Then it was Miss Tidman who took the initiative. Skipping round the table she caught the intruder a sounding slap on the back which sent it squealing out of the door. When she turned round reaction had already set in—her eyes were full of tears. But there was not a minute to lose. Even now the guests might be arriving. Kate had driven to meet some of them in the dog-cart.

"There is one cake not touched," said Birdie; "and what a blessing it is we did not put on all the scones at once!"

She carried away a pile of dirty plates as she spoke, and they heard her rummaging in the back premises.

"I am very sorry," said Jack. His long fingers were picking up crumbs and broken crockery as he spoke. No one had noticed his arrival, he had appeared in his usually silent fashion. Now he kept well under the table that he might not see the tears which were dropping from Miss Tidman's eyes as she cleared the *débris*.

"It looked so nice," she sobbed in her vexation.

"And it will again," responded Jack cheerfully.

He brought in a bundle of coloured leaves and covered up deficiencies on the cloth. His fingers seemed deft as a woman's. He cut bread and butter with an energy that filled plates by magic. The teapot was filled before Miss Tidman realised that the kettle had been taken from her. He sent them both off at the first sound of wheels to greet their guests with the authority of a master of the situation.

"I can finish everything else, and will make you some toast to fill up vacancies. You don't know what a prime hand I am at it."

He was. To those who did not miss the primeval glories of the feast it was a great success. The bungalow resounded with talk and laughter. Even the young ladies forgot to criticise in the novelty of having a handsome man to flirt with.

Jack was ubiquitous. He was a host in himself. His habitual lassitude seemed to disappear in a burst of energy. He even pressed the parrots into the service, and made them chatter the most ridiculous nonsense.

When the guests were gone he stayed to wash up, and proved himself a kitchen-maid of no ordinary ability. Miss Tidman was generous, whatever other faults she might possess. She did not accept favours without acknowledging them. Her thanks were given freely and heartily.

"We owe all our success to you," she said; "thank you very, very much."

Jack's big hand completely enveloped the small one held out to him. He looked at her a little queerly.

"One learns to make the best of things out here," he said carelessly.

In spite of the soft lazy tones it sounded almost like a rebuke. Miss Tidman felt herself flushing involuntarily. Why should Jack always constitute himself her mentor? He might keep his little moral remarks for the benefit of those who liked them. But with this thought came another; a sudden consciousness that he might be speaking out of an experience which might perchance cost him something. Birdie said he had literally given up his heart's desire. Such things were not easy. None knew it better than Miss Tidman. Her woman's heart grew soft as she pondered it, and wondered whether he had minded very much. Had the experience been very bitter? Perhaps the backwoods held more heroes than she imagined.

"Wouldn't he have looked jolly in the cavalry?" said Birdie's voice behind her, as the lithe figure came round the corner of the house and rode away, man and horse but one creature.

"Very," said Miss Tidman cordially, and she felt kinder towards Jack than she had ever done before, and wrote quite a glowing description of him home, so that her mother might be predisposed in favour of her future son-in-law.

After this the weeks passed by in more or less monotony. Butter-making and teaching, cooking and gardening, kept the girls busy in various ways. They had planned the concoction of all sorts of delicacies from the orchard, where peaches blushed in every shade of crimson colouring. But locusts again intervened. Trees, absolutely bare of every leaf, the bark even in some places taken off, and a few lank twigs from which depended dry peach stones, was the sight which greeted their eyes one morning. It was indeed a land where you had to make the best of everything.

And after that winter came, with intensely cold mornings and evenings, and contradictory heat in the middle of the day. It was trying to English constitutions, and the girls suffered accordingly. Miss Tidman felt quite proud of being the only one who did not succumb, and proved herself an able nurse—whatever mistakes she might make in the dairy. She learned to make beef tea of which a good cook need not have been ashamed.

"And we need not economise in that," she said, "with meat only twopence halfpenny a pound."

Jack haunted the bungalow at all sorts of odd hours, but the sister forgave him in consideration of his natural anxiety for Birdie's health. She quite admired the palpable excuses he would make to help dust, or even cook, in order to linger about the house. Of course it helped her wonderfully, and, poor fellow, it distracted his mind. Only she could not make out why, when she had been enlarging upon his merits to Birdie, the latter hid her face under the bed-clothes in fits of irrepressible laughter. Even illness could not sober Birdie!

Kate was up again first, and took over the dairy with an energy which scorned the idea of invalid ways. But then Kate was always plucky; it was only the north wind which took the life out of her. No one jokes about the north wind in Argentina, for it is far too serious a fact. It seems to exercise a specially malevolent influence upon English people. Sometimes they go mad. Even the natives recognise this peculiarity, and there is an unwritten law that should an Englishman commit a crime—even murder—during the prevalence of the north wind, he goes unpunished.

Kate did not go mad; but when the north wind blew all her strength of will could not avail to bear up against it. She could do nothing but lie prostrate until the weather-cock should veer round again. Birdie was particularly brisk when she rejoined the triumvirate.

"Go off to your teaching, dear," she told Miss Tidman with a kiss. "I am sure you are longing to be at it again."

She was. There had been a cessation of lessons during the past three weeks; but teaching, even dull pupils, was more to her taste than cooking. However, Miss Tidman fully realised that she herself had been in a very practical school and learned something more lasting than the making of beef tea.

She sat at her desk and drummed irregular verbs into the heads of her pupils with a patience which nothing might destroy. A shadow came in the doorway; a long hand placed a bunch of roses, fragrant, fresh, beautiful, on her desk. Then the silent donor went away, and the doorway was empty. The young ladies tittered. Miss Tidman felt her unwilling colour rise, but she was equal to the occasion. Not one glance wandered to the flowers.

"We will continue," she said coldly. "What is the imperative mood of *dormir*?"

Her mood was imperative, and there was no rest for them. They rang the changes of every conjugation till the jingle of notes was distraction. They came and went, sat down and clothed themselves in every mood and tense it was possible to imagine. Miracles were performed in the way they appeared and disappeared, foresaw and conquered, without moving from their seats. The gentler arts of sewing and writing were lost in the unblushing glibness with which they asserted "I shall curse," "let us slander." Their teacher had never before been so peremptory. But when they had all gone, her dignity departed. She stamped her foot like a vexed child.

"The audacity of the man," she said, "with those girls here!" Then she looked at the roses; they were beautiful, and Miss Tidman loved flowers. A very gentle look came into her eyes as they rested on the exquisite blossoms; the pink in her cheeks rivalled the blushing petals when she drank in their sweetness.

"Only he should not have brought them then; I allow no one to interrupt lessons," she murmured, true to her principles.

But Miss Tidman had not yet gauged the depths of Jack's audacity.

Birdie had decreed that on the very next moonlight night they would ride across the pampas to drive cattle. No one would be allowed to cry off from the expedition. It was a glorious excitement, and the little woman's eyes twinkled with anticipated pleasure as she mounted the horse her own hand had trained.

"I think your animal will be all right, Bess, though he has not done this work before. If you are frightened you can change with one of us."

But her sister felt braver than usual that night, and stifled the qualms which her heart might forbode of unknown dangers.

Besides themselves the party consisted of two of their men, Kate's cousins, and of course Jack. He always divined by instinct when anything was up.

They rode for miles over the pampas, the huge, boundless plain stretching away into a perspective only reached to show new areas of limitless space lying under the brilliant moon in the grandeur of silent immensity.

"It is glorious," said Birdie.

She dashed past Miss Tidman with sparkling eyes, hands down, back erect. Then followed Kate, and after her the men. On, on in one swift rush, their horses bending to the work as if they too felt and loved the exhilaration; while in front the plunging snorting cattle were driven towards home.

And just then Miss Tidman's horse refused to move. It not only declined to be infected by the general excitement, but, without rhyme or reason, started bucking violently. To do her credit she stuck to it. Something of her father's martial spirit came to her as with clenched teeth and whitening lips she clung on like grim death to the

rough saddle. But it requires one born to the work to ride a buck-jumper, and the little governess was nearly ending her career when an arm, whose veins were like whipcord, lifted her bodily from the saddle and transferred her to his own.

For a second Miss Tidman was too dazed to realise what had happened, then she woke to the fact that she was seated on Jack's horse, in front of him, and supported by his arm. Outraged dignity took the place of gratitude. She did not even feel thankful.

"Let me go," she cried. "How dare you?"

"Sit still," he said coolly; "I am not going to let you ride that brute again."

"I will," asserted Miss Tidman, struggling to get down. "Let me get down."

"You cannot," answered Jack's voice behind her. "The brute has already gone home as hard as it can."

And then before she had time to collect her ideas, or consider what the next move should be, he had bent down and was speaking into her ear words which crowded over each other in the passionate haste with which they were uttered.

"Is it so distasteful to be near me? Do you not know how I do nothing but think Eliza, dream Eliza, breathe Eliza?"

Yes, she had heard right. The words were absolutely distinct in their thrilling intensity. Anger seemed the only weapon with which to combat them.

"How dare you?" she repeated. "How dare you? Coward! To say such things to me when I cannot escape!"

Jack sat up suddenly, perfectly straight. She heard him catch his breath almost like a sob in his chest, but his voice was quite firm.

"I will not speak again," he said.

They rode home. Miss Tidman in front, upright as a dart, trying not to let the smallest part of her dress or person touch the silent figure behind her. Jack, absolutely motionless, seemed carved in marble. Nothing but the even motion of the horse lessening the miles with incredible swiftness, testified to their being living creatures. Geraint and Enid were nothing to it.

When the bungalow was reached, Miss Tidman was lifted down and placed in the verandah without the silence being broken; then her cavalier remounted and rode away.

Birdie might have her suspicions of the sound and sudden sleep which had overtaken her sister that night, but she had to wait till the following morning for explanations.

Miss Tidman was disgracefully late for breakfast, and when she did appear, seemed to have brought no appetite. But her sister was inexorable. She only waited for Kate to go off to the dairy to demand: "Now I want to hear all about last night."

There was no getting away from Birdie. Bit by bit she wormed a full confession from her shamefaced sister. Where the narrator's

powers failed, she put leading questions and supplied omissions. Her verdict was pitiless and unsympathetic.

"Well, I cannot see where the daring comes in; the man is a gentleman. You might at least have been grateful to him for saving your life."

"It is not that," objected Miss Tidman, in tearful indignation, not quite knowing how to convey her meaning in a delicate form, "but—being—untrue—to you."

Birdie surveyed her sobbing sister for an instant in puzzled contemplation, then went off into one of her peals of laughter.

"Me?" she said, "me? Why, good gracious, child, he never gave me a thought, nor I him. Anyone with half an eye could see that he was head over ears in love with you. We all knew it. Why, just look how he has for ever been at the house since you arrived, how he got you those pupils, how he helped you when I was ill——"

She stopped for want of breath. Miss Tidman was looking at her in silent open-eyed amazement. Then she slowly went into her own room and shut the door.

Chaos reigned supreme in her mind. What did it all mean? How could she find a thread to disentangle this ravelled skein of thought? When had it all begun, and how? One sentence of Birdie's rang in her ears and brought shamefaced blushes to her cheeks. *We all knew it!* Miss Tidman's modest little soul quivered at the bare idea.

This man had been making love to her for—how long? And she, who prided herself on her powers of perception had not only never discovered it, but encouraged him—yes, encouraged him to come about the house, thinking to benefit Birdie.

She was writhing under the thought, when that last-named person came bounding into the room.

"Have your blushes cooled yet, dear little Miss Propriety? See, I bring you means of escape. The mail is in, and here is a letter from mother. She wants you to go home by the earliest boat you can, to help look after the house. Aunt Jane has been paralysed, and mother has promised to take a month's turn at nursing her later on—but you can read for yourself."

Miss Tidman took the letter and mastered its contents. Then she began almost mechanically to collect her things.

"Boats do not go every ten minutes like suburban trains," remarked Birdie drily. "There is not one for a fortnight, so you will have plenty of time to pack."

Plenty of time. But the days seemed to fly like lightning. Human nature is proverbially made up of contradictions. Now that she was about to leave it, Argentina grew suddenly dear to her. The flowers—there were none like them in England: the little bungalow—it was rough, but they had had some jolly days there together; the

life was healthy and free, though devoid of the conventionalities she had always considered essential.

Then she upbraided herself. It was ridiculous to go on like this when she was going home. Had she not always disliked the Argentine, the rough ways, the lawless natives? Had she not longed for home ever since she landed in this foreign land? Ought she not to be in the highest spirits at the idea of seeing her mother?

A tear splashed into the trunk she was packing; then another; and another. It was a queer way of showing pleasure, except that we know that there are such things as tears of joy. Happily the silent drops are not labelled as they fall, so tell no tales.

She went out and talked sentiment to the green parrots.

"Loro," she crooned softly, "Loro, you will stay here in the beautiful sunshine while I go back to the fogs."

But the parrots did not understand sentiment. The biggest one cocked his head impishly and tried to bite the finger caressing his feathers. The smaller one screeched out "Jack" and flew off to the top of a castor oil plant.

Miss Tidman looked round startled, half expecting the owner to answer to his name. But there was no one.

She waited all the week, and he never came. Not once was the long listless figure seen to lounge into the verandah. She had prepared a dignified farewell, in which she should bid him good-bye with a self-possessed coldness which ignored all past delinquencies; treated even that other evening as though it were forgotten—had never happened.

But the rehearsal palled after being mentally enacted several dozen times without its object appearing. The dignity of it even wore out in a longing just to "shake hands" before she sailed. A wearisome reiteration started on its own account in her brain, and went on like a wheel. "Jack," it said, "Jack." Jack had been kind to her. Jack had found pupils for her when she was growing disheartened. Jack had saved her life.

It took the colour out of her cheeks, and sleep from her eyes. She drooped and grew visibly thin. The good of a year was undone in a week. Birdie scolded and petted in a breath as she tucked her up on the sofa before hurrying off to her work.

"Do try and get half-an-hour's sleep. I cannot think what has come to you, Bess. Mother will be horrified. You look a perfect wreck."

And she bustled away.

Miss Tidman obediently closed her eyes, then opened them again with the consciousness that something was darkening the sunshine. Something long and tall in the doorway, towards which she stretched out sudden arms of entreaty.

"Oh, Jack, forgive me!"

The long legs made one stride across the little room to Miss Tidman's couch; their owner gathered up her small crumpled figure in his arms as if she had been a baby. In spite of her blushes he put her on his knee, and gently pressing her head against his shoulder, laid his own sunburnt face against it.

"Let it rest," said Jack, "no woman's head has ever lain there before."

Then there was a long, long pause.

"And you do not mind so very much, mother?" pleaded Miss Tidman some few months later.

Home was looking, if possible, more homelike than ever, in the peaceful beauty of a June evening. Bees humming among the limes; roses and fair white lilies bordering the path, haymakers calling far off in the meadows.

The only unfamiliar thing, a long lazy figure lounging against the gate, watching the frantic efforts of some fat white ducks to squeeze themselves underneath.

Mrs. Tidman's eyes were twinkling with some of Birdie's mischief as she turned round.

"I am thinking," she said, "that there were some other things nicer even than the birds and flowers and climate, which you never told me of, in Argentina!"

M. F. W.

THE FIRST NIGHT OF WINTER.

DEEP as the deep glow from a furnace door,
The red glare fiercely rends the Western sky
Where the sun vanished. The last low sigh
From out the wind-stirred pines comes stealing o'er
The silent heath, then fades and is no more.
Now earth and sky commingle, land and cloud
Grow indistinct in darkness; like a shroud
The white mist creeps up slowly, damp and raw.
The crimson West grows faint, the twilight dies,
Earth cowering shrinks before Night's icy breath;
Her pulses cease as Nature shuddering lies,
Then beat anew in fearful strife with Death.
The black clouds break, the frozen lands appear,
The winter moon uprises, cold and clear.

R. BOURNE,

SOMETHING IN THE AIR.

WE had spent our evening together, in our usual quiet way, my old friend and I. She had had a piece of her easy-going needlework in her hand, and a book open before her. I too had a book. From time to time we had read aloud a sentence or a paragraph which struck us, and we had made our comments thereon. But at last I closed my volume, and she turned from hers and went on with her knitting, till that, too, was dropped upon her knee, and she sat gazing into the fire, which was now of a fine redness, with great glowing hollows.

A name seemed suddenly cast upon my mind. It was the name of one who was no son of hers, nor lover of mine. Indeed, there was no kith nor kin among any of us. Yet it was a name which in years gone by had been burned into both our lives, and had left scars behind. We seldom spoke that name. We might, very rarely, mention it casually in connection with the past times with which it had been associated. But we had never talked over the tragic circumstances which had torn that name from our lives and hidden it in the depths of memory. We scarcely expected ever again to find it among our daily incidents. For aught we knew, it might be already graven on a tombstone, or far more likely buried in an unnamed grave.

My old friend made some slight movement. I looked up at her. Our eyes met. Her lips parted as in a smile, but there was no smile in her eyes.

"I am thinking of Willie Trevor," she said in a whisper.

I started. I did not need to tell her that so was I. I saw she knew it.

"Things come back to me," she said, "things I had quite forgotten. I seem to be living them over again. I can hear the dash of the rain in the great storm of that day when he first—" she paused and shivered. No need to tell me that story! "I feel the chill of the midnight when I sat and waited," she went on; "I can smell the damp night atmosphere. I can see him, as I saw him then coming crouching along by the wall."

"Stay! oh stay!" I cried. "I cannot bear to hear you."

She looked up at me, but as if she did not see me.

"It is not my words you cannot bear," she said, "it is Something in the room. Something is here. It is a Spirit. Or it is somebody's thought, sent here over land and sea. Perhaps after all what people call ghosts are only thoughts sent out of another world."

I trembled a little. Oh, no. I saw nothing. I heard nothing. But I felt Something. Just as we feel the presence of a living creature in a dark room which we had thought to be empty.

I felt almost as if emotions were surging around us so stormily that they might presently be audible. I put my hand in my friend's, and we kept silence. We sat so a long time. Gradually the tension slackened. The room became our old familiar parlour, where we worked and read o' nights, and interviewed the parish mothers about blankets and broth. We drew our hands apart, taking a long breath. We looked in each other's face and smiled significantly.

"It is over!" said my friend.

"What was it?" I gasped.

She shook her head. She did not speak for a moment, then she said, "Who shall say? Perhaps we shall know some day. Possibly we may know soon. Probably we may never know. Not while we are here."

The servant came in at this moment, bringing the supper-tray with our milk and biscuits. My friend stirred the fire, breaking down the glowing hollows into a cheery flame.

When we were alone again, I asked timidly, "Did you ever feel anything like this before?" A smile flitted across my friend's face.

"Oh, often," she answered.

"And did anything ever follow which seemed to you to explain?"

"Sometimes," she said. "Not always. Generally, though, in the end, though I might not know the explanation for long afterwards—years and years."

"But you have never heard anything with your ears—or what seemed like hearing with your ears?" I pressed.

"Never. If I did I should send for a doctor at once."

"But don't you seem to hear a whisper in your own spirit, telling you what the feeling—the horror—signifies?"

She reflected. "Very seldom," she said. "Fancies may rise—and they generally prove wrong."

"And you, having felt the unseen world so near—so near, that I believe I felt it too, because I was beside you—have you never seen—anything?" I whispered.

She answered decidedly, "No; I have never seen anything that would be called an 'appearance.' I say again, if I did so, I should send for a medical man. Spirit may surely touch our spirit; but if it interferes with waking eyes and ears, I should think something must be wrong somewhere. I may be mistaken."

I echoed her words.

"You have never seen anything that would be called an 'appearance.' Then have you seen anything whatever?"

"Yes," she answered frankly. "I have once or twice had 'visions'—something between sleeping and waking—often a mere glimpse, that escaped too soon to be fixed."

"Dreams?" I suggested.

"No," she said energetically. "I dream a great deal—nearly always very pleasant dreams, and often dreams picturesque and

dramatic. But these 'visions' are quite different. Nobody who had known both could ever confuse them. But my 'visions' are generally only a 'flash,' nothing more."

"Yet not always?" I urged.

"Not quite always," she answered, a new gravity settling over her face. "I remember one that stayed long enough for me to study it."

"Will you tell me about it? Can you bear to tell me?"

"I will tell you," she replied in her simple sincere way. "I do not often speak of such things, but after what we have felt together to-night it seems different."

I drew forward a stool and settled myself at her feet, my hands in her lap.

"It is long ago," she recounted; "in the days when I used to visit Howton Castle."

I knew Howton Castle—a great rambling place on the edge of a moor. It had stood untenanted for years now, during a long minority. But before that I knew my friend had been often a guest there, joining in the pleasant functions of a hospitable country house, and staying for the night in the singularly comfortable and prosaic chambers for which Howton was distinguished. They had no secret staircases, no mysterious bloodstains, nothing but solid early Victorian furniture, velvet pile carpets and Arctic down quilts.

"It was the very last time I was there," said my friend. "You have heard me speak of young Theodore Gunning, my husband's favourite pupil?"

I answered, "Yes."

Indeed, I had heard a great deal about Theodore Gunning, not from my friend alone, but from everybody in her connection or about her household. He had been dearly loved in that home, whose own little ones were all folded in baby graves. He had been evidently a charming youth, with every gift of mind and grace of disposition. His name came into the story of every happy day or pleasant incident of the years which he had passed under his old tutor's roof, and of even later years too, for after he had gone to Oxford it was evident that he had constantly returned to spend much of his leisure with his old friends. I had some vague idea that he had gone abroad. It had been often on my lips to ask what had become of him; but, after all, our interest in those we ourselves have never seen is generally rather dim and indefinite.

She said, "Then you may remember having heard how, during his university days, Theodore always spent his autumn holidays with us. He wrote to us generally very frequently, though once or twice there were long intervals of silence over which we did not wonder, attributing them to special pressure of study. Still, I don't remember that he ever advanced that excuse. But certainly we claimed none. Well, that year we were expecting him as usual for his autumn visit. He had been writing often—rather short letters, 'as he was to see

us so soon.' In his last he wrote that probably the next word from him would be a telegram announcing the train by which he should travel to us. It was on the afternoon of that very day—a Monday—that we received an invitation to Howton. It was rather a sudden invitation—'to dine and sleep' there on the following Thursday—to meet an unexpected guest in whose work Lady Howton thought I should be interested. Of course, I accepted the invitation, for though Theodore might appear on the Tuesday or Wednesday, he might equally well be delayed till Friday or Saturday. Even if he should come while I was away, it would not matter: all the servants knew him well, and he would be at his ease in a house which had been his very home for years. My husband too would be at home to dinner, though he could not accompany me to Howton, as he had a lecture engagement for Thursday evening. So I saw that Theodore's room was ready, gave the cook instructions in the event of his arrival, and went off to my visit.

"I remember the loveliness of my long drive through the old woods just gently touched with autumn glory. We had a very pleasant evening—evenings were generally pleasant at Howton, and before midnight I retired to my sleeping apartment.

"It was not one I had ever occupied, though all the Howton guest chambers were so alike that I was only sure of this by the view from the windows. I had never before looked from this point. It was so lovely in the moonlight that, having once drawn aside the curtain, I lingered awhile, gazing, before I went to rest.

"I don't remember anything more—I cannot recall any restlessness or dreaming—till suddenly I saw the room full of morning sunshine—saw the writing-table with its brass ornaments—and yet in the midst of all, as if it were part of the appointments of the place, I saw also a figure recumbent on a strange, flat resting-place: not a couch, rather more like the flap of a table—the figure lay as if it had thrown itself down in the utter abandonment of despair, with wraps and rugs clutched about it. I could not see the face—my point of view was, as it were, the top of the head; but by its sunny cluster of curls I knew it was the form of Theodore Gunning!

"Now, I can't say, that 'thereupon I awoke,' because it seems to me that I was already awake. All that I know is that while I gazed—well!—the sunlit room and the brass ornamented writing-desk remained; but the figure and its strange resting-place had faded away.

"Oddly enough, it did not seem to make much impression on me at the moment. I lay still and watched the sunbeams making play among the crisping foliage visible through the curtains which I had left half undrawn. But as I rose and dressed, I began to feel uneasy. Could it mean anything? That figure was well-nigh as prone as death itself. And on what did it repose? Was it possible that there had been a railway accident, and that Theodore was—

I forced myself to laugh, saying drily that in real life warnings never come with such wonderful precision. I resolutely put the idea out of my mind, and I can honestly say that I succeeded so far as not even to associate with it a certain vague depression which presently stole over me, and made me very glad when the hour came for my return.

"The morning drive homeward was so exhilarating that by the time I reached home I was quite my usual self. I remembered my 'vision' as I stood on the doorstep, and wondered whether Theodore had arrived, or whether any message had yet come from him. The old cook happened to admit me. Theodore had been a great favourite with her, and her first words were—

"'There's been no word of Mr. Gunning yet, ma'am.'"

"Then he has not yet started, and has not been in the sphere of railway accidents, and my vision comes to nothing,' was my silent reflection, made with a secret self-mockery.

"I was very busy all the rest of the day. My husband had been called from home, and did not return till late, and I spent the evening working off arrears of correspondence, so that I might be free to take leisure when Theodore came. For his visits were always full of picnics, and trips, and chatter: we made them as bright as we could, for our house remained, in a way, the only home he had."

"Where were his own people?" I asked.

"His mother was dead," answered my friend. "She had died in her youth. From all I ever heard, she must have been a sweet woman. It was surely from her that Theodore inherited his lovely disposition and his gifts. His father, we thought, was a strange man—and he had married again, into a queer family—folk of a very different style from his first wife's people. They lived abroad, and Theodore never went to them, though he always wrote dutifully and sent gifts to his stepmother."

"My question has interrupted you," I remarked; "please go on."

"Well," she resumed, with a slight catch in her breath, "on the next morning—Saturday morning—as my husband and I sat at breakfast, looking over our letters, he suddenly gave a little cry. I looked up. His face was pale and startled.

"My dear Kate," said he, 'prepare for a surprise, and a painful surprise; but don't be frightened! It is not death, or anything of that sort. Only Theodore Gunning will not be here. He has left this country for Monte Video. "It cannot be helped," he writes, and asks me to break it gently to his dear old friend, my wife. He adds, "he has made his own bed, and he must lie on it." That was all. My husband showed me the letter. It was only a few lines hastily written after Theodore was on board the steamer on which he had sailed from Liverpool on Thursday night."

"It was a vision of him, in his berth, which you had seen!" I whispered.

She bowed her head. "Yes," she said. "I told my husband, and we could come to no other conclusion. That is all."

"Did you never learn how the sudden departure came about?" I asked.

"We learned two things—but only long, long afterwards," she said. "We learned that Theodore had been married a few days before he left this country, and we learned that he made his outward voyage alone: that first night of his at sea seems to have been the climax of some tragedy."

"And he never writes to you now?"

"Never," she answered. "My husband and I wrote many letters to him, and he wrote to us, but he never told us anything, and his letters were never replies to aught we said. Then the silence closed over us. But wherever Theodore Gunning is, there, I am sure, is one who thinks kindly of us. God grant that he is doing justice to the gifts God gave him. If I were sure of that, I should be quite satisfied. Lost time in that direction can never be made up. But for everything else there will be plenty of time in eternity."

"It puzzles me," said I, "how his thought could have found you at Howton. For he must have thought of you as at home in your own house."

"Is not that rather materialistic?" she asked, with her faint smile. "When we get into realms of the spirit, can anything hide from it? I think the world is full of these flashings to and fro, if only all of us were always open to receive them."

"They never seem of much use when they do come," I murmured. "They are always either too late or apparently without object."

"Who knows?" she answered. "Once we knew of electricity but as a deadly foe. Now it is our familiar servant. We have not come to the end of all things yet. The curtain of the future screens from us vaster regions than any the human race has already explored—and sometimes it waves aside for a moment, and we catch a glimpse. We must have patience for what it may take thousands of years to fully reveal. Even as it is, that strange vision of our old favourite has wonderfully soothed me. It has made it easier for me to bear what has seemed like heartlessness and ingratitude. Through it, I know that Theodore did not vanish into silence in any mere callousness and indifference, and though he could command their semblance, yet in the moment of his agony his soul cried out to his old friends. It shows one how the great depths of affection lie safe beneath the slight storms of passion and folly."

I looked at the little lady with her widow's cap on her waving white hair. She did not return my glance. Her gaze seemed already drawn out to wide horizons.

MY SAINT KATHERINE.

SHE lay on an invalid chair when first I saw her—my Saint Katherine—under the shade of an old elm-tree, and by its side sat Sister Barbara, knitting. The sunlight glared on the lawn in patches of merciless heat, but through the elm-leaves it only made little dancing gleams of glory on Saint Katherine's hair, and on her white Tam-o'-Shanter, which was the only halo she wore.

"What a pity Katherine does not curl her hair in front," said my sister to me one evening. "Her forehead is monstrous, and her eyes so large too. Now if she would only arrange it down a little——"

For me, I liked the soft shining hair so simply brushed back from Katherine's wide brow.

I came upon her one morning with a ponderous 'Book of Days' propped up before her.

"Have you ambitions in the dictionary-compiling direction?" I asked lightly.

Katherine smiled.

"I am just looking up my patron saint, and studying her life."

"And she was ——?" said I, for that was before the days of her canonization.

"Katherine. Katherine with a 'K,'" she answered. "Some people spell me with a 'C,' but I do not like it so well."

"Why," I replied, "if the derivation be from the Greek, as I suppose it is, I would insist upon the 'K'."

Our friendship progressed by degrees, and I often found my way to the side of the long chair under the elm-tree. Sister Barbara, with eyes on her knitting, would intersperse our conversation with her quaint, forcible remarks; and when my sister joined us too, we became quite a merry party, for my saint believed in laughter.

"Katherine is so devoted to music," said her mother to me one evening. "I know it is not right to ask you to play, whose notes are golden, but——"

"I will play with all the pleasure imaginable," said I, making my way to the piano.

Someone had been singing Schumann's *Du bist wie eine Blume*, and the copy lay open on the desk. So I took the melody as my theme, and perhaps the quiet twilight inspired me, perhaps my saint's shining eyes, for I played on and on until the lamps were brought.

"When Saint Katherine wants music she shall have it," I said, crossing to her side again, and her happy face was thanks enough.

Music became another bond between us, and together we rejoiced over many a new "find" in the way of rich harmony or melody. But the one I had taken as the theme of my after-dinner improvisation

was a favourite with Katherine, and became known as 'My melody.' And it grew to be a settled thing that when I played to her, 'Her Melody' should be woven somehow into the fabric of the music; if not as the central theme, then as a "good-night" phrase at the end.

One morning I found Saint Katherine alone, and with tears in her eyes. This was so unusual that I ventured to ask the reason of it. She did not speak for a few moments, and when she did, her remarks scarcely seemed an answer to my question.

"I have so much to be thankful for!" she said. "Just think, I might have dreadful pain to bear, and I haven't any to speak of. And then, how good everyone is to me; my darling mother, and Sister Barbara, and you and your sister—everyone in short."

"Who could help being good to Saint Katherine?" said I. I felt angry, I don't know with whom, that this sweet soul should have this heavy cross to bear.

"Here am I," went on Katherine, "with nothing to bother me, everyone to be kind to me, my sweet mother just wearing herself out trying to get me things that I like, and yet I can't be good! What should I be like if I had to go about in the world with many things to worry me—as other people have?"

"Didn't somebody say once," said I—"someone who had tried being a hermit or a monk or something, that the temptations of the world were bad enough, but that the temptations of the cell were infinitely worse?"

"Did he? Poor man! Well, perhaps that explains why I am so bad sometimes. I think," with quivering under-lip, "you ought not to call me Saint Katherine any more. I can't deserve it!"

"But I shall," said I. "For you are Saint Katherine—my Saint Katherine;" and I took her hand.

I felt her eyes raised to mine questioningly, but I would not meet them. After a moment the hand was withdrawn, and we sat quite quietly.

Presently she said, with such a pitiful attempt at brightness:

"You have not noticed my new white wrap that Sister Barbara knitted for me, and I am so vain about it!"

But I would not speak. How could I know, if I opened my lips at all, what they would say?

She went on—such a dear, anxious little voice: "Shall I tell you what I have been thinking?" I nodded.

"I wanted to put it on this morning, because I thought perhaps you and your sister would be coming in to see me; and then I scolded myself for being so vain. But in my 'Daily Light' for to-day"—and she took a little book from under her pillow—"there is that text, 'We shall see Him as he is; and every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure.' And I thought perhaps"—very softly—"it was something like that—like my wanting to wear my white shawl, I mean. We want to look nice for our

friends to see, and, of course, for Him we should want to be, oh, so beautiful and sweet, should we not?"

And then someone came in to fetch me, and I left her alone.

When we went into her room to say "good-bye," Katherine was her own bright self again. I believe Bessie's eyes were wet as she stooped to kiss her.

"Good-bye, little friend," she said; "don't forget you have promised to beat me at croquet next summer."

"Ah, yes," smiled my saint. "And you, Miss Bernard, mind you get quite strong soon; I hope the Riviera will do you no end of good. Oh, what lovely places you will have to tell me about when I see you next."

But when I left the Riviera I was alone—alone with the memory of those last mournful days at Cannes. And a year of solitary wandering was passed before I saw my saint again.

The invalid-chair still had its occupant, but sometimes the eyes under the white Tam-o'-Shanter looked larger and brighter than ever. Perhaps it was that the sweet face was thinner and paler, but I would not let myself think so.

"You must get better quickly now, for my sake, sweet," I said, for I had then told her my love.

"I think I am getting better every day," she answered, and I knew what she meant, but it made me angry, and I would make believe not to understand.

"I almost wish," she said one day, so wistfully, "that you did not care for me, Carl—like this, I mean. It is no use, my own dear, and I cannot bear for it to make you unhappy."

"Very well," said I, "I'll go away to-morrow, and forget all about Saint Katherine. Will that do?" and I kissed her hand.

Her eyes sparkled as I loved to see them.

"It is wicked to tell stories," said my saint. "Suppose I held you to your word?"

"You couldn't," said I, and I kissed her again. "And a falsehood, beloved, is something said *with intent to deceive*; but you understand my late remark perfectly!"

Well, it is years ago now, and I can bear to think of it more calmly. For every day and every night brings me nearer to my saint again. And God, who only knows how I bore it all, and who has but strengthened the love by the long days of waiting, will let me see her face again. And for the rest, I but ask humbly of Him who is able may keep me from falling, that I may, in His good time, meet her face to face without shame.

"Katherine," I said one day—I was kneeling by her bed, she never left it then—"I have loved you always—always since I saw you; did you know?"

"Yes," she said quietly; "I knew, dear." And she took my hand and stroked it gently. Then she drew my face down to hers, and looked in my eyes.

"I want to thank you—for everything," she said. "You have always been so good to me—never anything but good, Carl."

"I have loved you always with a pure love, Saint Katherine," I murmured humbly.

And she answered again: "Yes, I knew."

I was deputising at the church for a few weeks, but on that last Sunday evening I suggested getting a substitute:

"I don't want to leave you to-night," I said. But she would not hear of it.

"I want you to go, dear," she argued. "My window is open, and I shall hear 'our melody' when you play it, and I shall know you are thinking of me, and playing for me, Carl; just for me only."

So I left the *Shrine*, as I called her room, and went.

The storm-clouds were gathering closer and closer, and the air was unbearably hot. All the church windows were opened, and I knew that the sound of the organ would reach my Katherine's ears. So when the offertory began, "our melody" echoed round the old walls, and floated out softly on the hot air, out across the churchyard, and through a window into the quiet room where Death stood waiting with outstretched shadowy wings.

"*So schön, so rein, und hold,*" the organ seemed to sing.

Then the last hymn was given out:

"*For all Thy saints who from their labours rest.*"

The white-robed choir sang on and on—did they understand what they were singing? Had they known one of his saints as I had?

A mist came before my eyes. I could scarcely see, as I stretched out my hand for the trumpet stop:—

"And when the fight is fierce, the warfare long,
Steals on the ear the distant triumph song,
And hearts are brave again, and arms are strong.

Hallelujah!"

And then softly, on the swell:—

"The golden evening brightens in the west,
Soon, soon to faithful warriors cometh rest;
Sweet is the calm of Paradise the blest.

Hallelujah!"

Was that *Katherine* by my side? My saint, with a whiter glory round her head than I had ever seen before? I saw her as plainly and distinctly as I had ever seen her in life; but never before with that strange, glorified expression.

I tried to say "Katherine"; but my lips would not move. I tried to stretch out my arms to her—how was it that I could not?

There was a sudden crash as of trumpets and drums, then dark-

ness. Presently, out of the mist I seemed to hear voices very far away :

"Fainted, poor fellow—thundery air. Hand me that tumbler again."

I could not speak, or open my eyes, and somehow the darkness seemed a relief. I wanted to be alone and quiet.

Once more I saw my saint. She was lying quietly, as I had left her when I went to church ; but with closed eyes and folded hands.

And on her breast I laid a cross of pure white lilies, and on the cross there was tied a card—"My Saint Katherine."

Ah, merciful Heaven, how much longer yet ?

C. BLACKWELL.

A FAREWELL.

GOOD-BYE ! Good-bye ! For us for ever past
The too-fond dream that sped so quickly by :
Gone are the happy days too sweet to last
And set our star upon our destiny.

Good-bye ! Oh never, never shall we know
Such hours again of rapt and pure delight ;
How slow and sad the weary hours now go—
Farewell the days that were for us so bright !

Good-bye ! The light is fading fast away,
And cold and dark all in the future grows ;
Deep night is creeping o'er a landscape gray,
And darkly, sadly, fast the daylight goes.

And slow and sad the heavy mist appears,
With mystic shadows stealing o'er the scene ;
Oh, dull and lifeless seem the coming years—
Good-bye, good-bye ! the days that once have been !

Good-bye ! Oh could that sound express the whole
Of all that's felt and utter'd in that sigh !
The last sad cry of a despairing soul
Is echoed in the word—Good-bye—Good-bye !

A DREAM-WORLD.

BY CHARLES W. WOOD, F.R.G.S., AUTHOR OF "LETTERS FROM MAJORCA," "IN THE VALLEY OF THE RHONE," ETC., ETC.

IT was such drives and walks and lake excursions as we have described, always accompanied by von D., that literally made *la pluie et le beau temps* of our stay in St. Moritz.

Von D. with his extensive travels, knowledge of the world, and wide acquaintance, from Royalty downwards, was a delightful companion. He had seen and observed much, and his thoughts and views were often as original as they were unexpected. But for him we should have left St. Moritz and the Engadine long before our time, and found our way to lower but more bracing latitudes.

Still the days passed, as they do pass, and the last one came: and when von D. appeared with sorrowful visage, ours fell in sympathy.

"I shall be lost when you are gone," he was good enough to say. "The hours will pass with leaden feet. It will be necessary to invent a malady, so that I may take two baths a day instead of one. Anything to while away the time. To-morrow morning when you start, the Band is going to play God save the Queen."

"But though you have Royal friends," we objected, "we are not Royal. The National Anthem would be out of place on such an occasion."

"All the same," returned von D., "they have made up their minds, and there is nothing more to be said. You must take it as a tribute to your country if you will not accept it as a personal compliment. But now, what is to be done on this our last day?"

"What indeed? I have an idea. We will clothe ourselves in sackcloth and ashes, and you shall come in and play the part of Job's comforter. But you will have to be three comforters rolled into one, so must come charged with the very essence of misery."

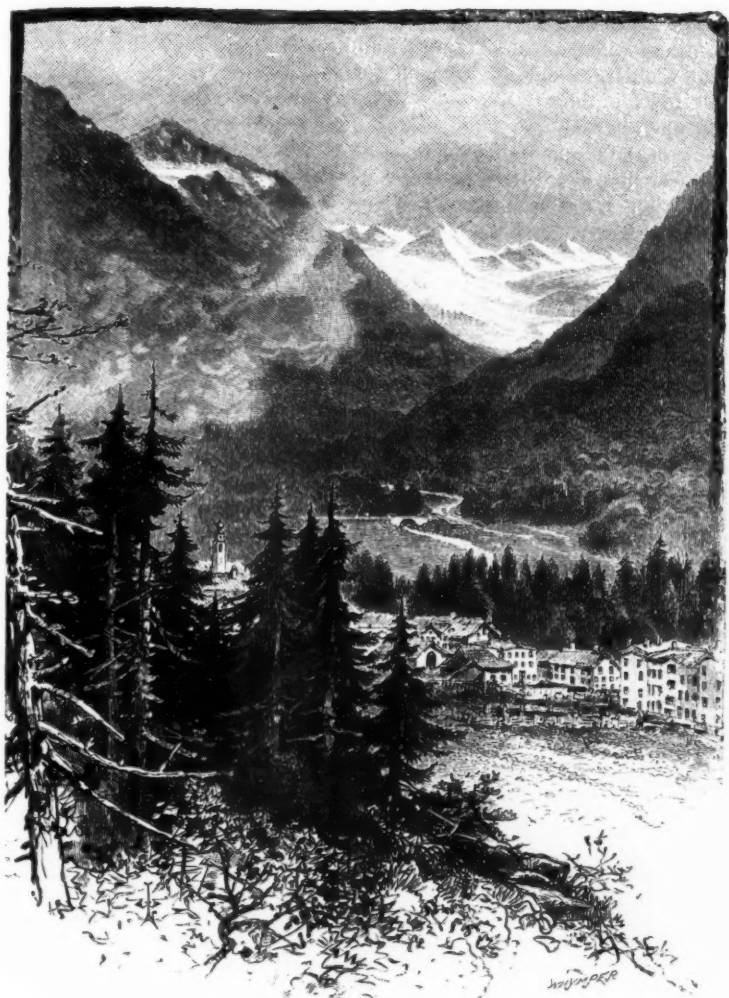
"That is not at all in my line," laughed Von D., to whom melancholy certainly seemed unknown. "I have a much brighter idea."

"And that is?"

"That our last excursion be across the lake to Silvaplana; where at the *Post* we will take a stirrup-cup, and in some of that wonderful sparkling Asti, drink to our next merry meeting."

"The very thing! Sackcloth and ashes countermanded. Let us at once retain Muretti and the boat."

"I knew we could only be of one mind," laughed von D.; "and Muretti and the boat are retained. Still if you would prefer sackcloth and ashes, there is time to——"



PONTRESINA.

"Not for worlds," we interrupted. "You shall be spared the unpleasant task of acting Job's comforter. Silvaplana and Asti for ever!"

So it came to pass that in the afternoon, when dinner was over—the dining-room was now crowded and the heavy midday meal somewhat long-drawn-out—we set off for the last time on our favourite walk towards the Crestalta.

A day intensely hot and brilliant, and yet snow had fallen in the night on the mountains, whose outlines shone white and sharp against the clear blue sky, where not the faintest vestige of a cloud was to be seen. The river had grown daily more shallow, until it threatened to dry up altogether. Even the evergreen pines and larches seemed to languish for want of rain.

Our boatman was true to his post. The awning was spread, the cushions were adjusted to the right angle, and he stood cap in hand, bowing to E. like a grand seigneur, whilst we helped her to her seat. Then the boat shot off from the shore and made swift way under Muretti's long strokes. The man was proud of his strength. To-day he looked handsomer than ever—a sort of master in his little world. Things had evidently gone well with him of late.

"Your season is a success," said Herr von D., upon whom he made the same impression.

"Si, signore," replied the man, showing his white even teeth beneath his black, finely-pencilled moustache. "The signor was a true prophet. Every day I have been engaged; sometimes two and three times a day. For this very afternoon I had three applications, only fortunately the signor bespoke me last week. I would not take anyone else for twice the money when the signori honour me with their patronage."

Muretti was honest in this; an offer of double fare would probably not have shaken his allegiance. On our part we looked at von D. Last week! Then this expedition had been long-planned. He read the unspoken question and laughed.

"Yes," he said, "quite a week ago. I felt it was the best thing to be done, and had to be done, this quaffing the stirrup-cup in the famous sparkling Asti of the *Post*. Had the malignant crossness of events hindered the expedition, it meant only paying the boatman's just demands." Then turning to the man: "So, Muretti, for once in your life you are contented?"

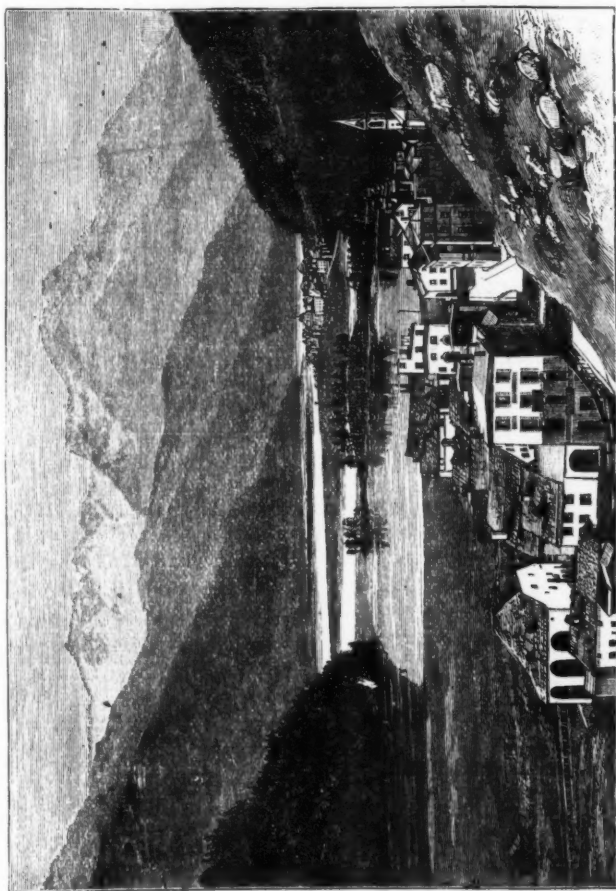
Muretti laughed, quite aware of his failing.

"It is stronger than me," he said. "I am worrying myself now with thinking that I haven't a chance of making, next year, as good a season as this."

Von D. gave in. "It is hopeless," he cried. "You cannot minister to a mind diseased. For such pessimism there is no cure."

Meanwhile it was delightful on the water. The boat rounded the point and shot across the lake, making its own refreshing breeze.

We were only bound for Silvaplane; the landing stage for Silz Maria was quite a long way off; but we made Muretti extend his rowing right round the lake, and so passed again close to the woods where we had lost our way on that first memorable occasion. We knew that we were now looking upon them for the last time, and over us



CAMPFER. SILVAPLANA IN THE DISTANCE.

came a sudden yearning born of "last times," which reminds one so painfully that here is no "continuing city."

We landed at last, Muretti calm and cool after his long row as if it had been midwinter in the Arctic regions. He was told to make fast his boat and follow us in half an hour's time, that he might drink our health in sparkling Asti,

Then we went up the walk between the houses, and soon found ourselves on the high road down which we had driven the first day of our arrival.

Beside it stood the long straggling inn *Zur Post*: an old place added to and modernized to suit present requirements. The interior, too dull and gloomy for a long sojourn, was sufficiently quaint to repay a short visit.

We established ourselves on a balcony overlooking the road, from which we surveyed the world. As it chanced, a good deal of traffic passed. Carriages out for a day's long drive, filled with ladies who had been taking sparkling Asti at Maloja, and were returning much more merry than when they had left the Kurhaus in the morning: Germans, whose loudness was only a matter of degrees. Then came a diligence, packed inside and out with its human freight. The best of mortals are not at their best *en voyage*; but the ordinary mortal simply becomes an object of compassion; a scare-crow.

Here the diligence changed horses, and after calling at St. Moritz would continue its way to Pontresina. The passengers would not unpack, but had all sorts of light refreshment brought out to them. Most of them were German, and the Germans have enormous absorbing capacities. Doctors have certified to this; it is a peculiarity in their constitution. After a halt of some minutes the coach went off again, raising a cloud of dust in its wake.

The sparkling Asti was certainly worthy its reputation, though regret mingled with its delicate flavour: the regret generally lurking in a stirrup-cup. Probably no such psychological flavour disturbed Muretti—who appeared in due time on the scene. A tumbler holding quite an imperial pint was brought, and filled with the frothing golden wine. He stood beside us at the table, with a certain bashfulness that gave him unconscious grace. An Englishman of the same rank would have been a very different and much clumsier object. Muretti took up his golden goblet with one hand, his cap in the other, and made us a comprehensive bow.

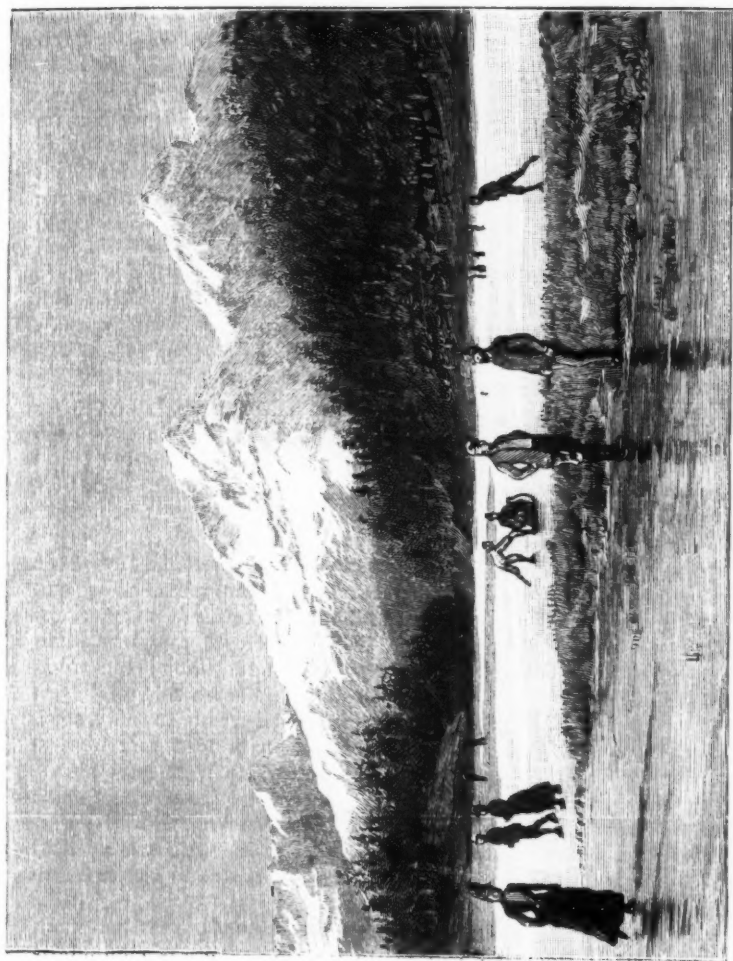
"I grieve it is the farewell wish," he said in his soft Italian. "If the signori will only come every year, I will keep to Campfer, and not seek to stray, and not desire it either. As it is, I wish the signori a good and happy journey, wherever fate may take them."

Then with another bow, he took a deep draught of wine, and drew a long breath after it.

"That is good indeed," he said. "I have never tasted its equal even in Italy. They have not exaggerated the merits of the Wilder Mann."*

"And on your part, Muretti," said von D., "do not exaggerate the merits of other places over Campfer and St. Moritz. They have served your purpose well, according to your own showing, and you must learn to be content. A rolling stone does no good in the end."

* The inn bore both names.



WINTER IN THE ENGADINE.

"The signor's words are words of wisdom," said Muretti ; "I will try to take them to heart. Discontent is my great fault. But," with a smile, "he would be hard to please who could find fault with this Asti."

With that he drained his goblet to the dregs, and with great delicacy, without waiting for a possible replenishing, made us another bow and walked quickly away tumbler in hand. Another minute and we saw him cross the road empty handed, on his way to the boat, there to await us.

Just before leaving, a well-appointed travelling carriage drove up with much luggage outside, two travellers within, and a courier beside the coachman. The gentleman, elaborately dressed, owning a brilliant complexion and carefully-waxed moustache, got out and entered the inn ; the lady remained invisible, and watch as we might we could catch no glimpse of her charms. In a few minutes the gentleman returned, carrying a tumbler of sparkling Asti. This he offered to the lady with an exquisite smile, and a fair white hand covered with rings was held out and took the glass. Some murmured words followed, no doubt of a sweet description, and we imagined the voice musical. The tumbler duly emptied, the fair jewelled hand was advanced, and the gentleman received it back again.

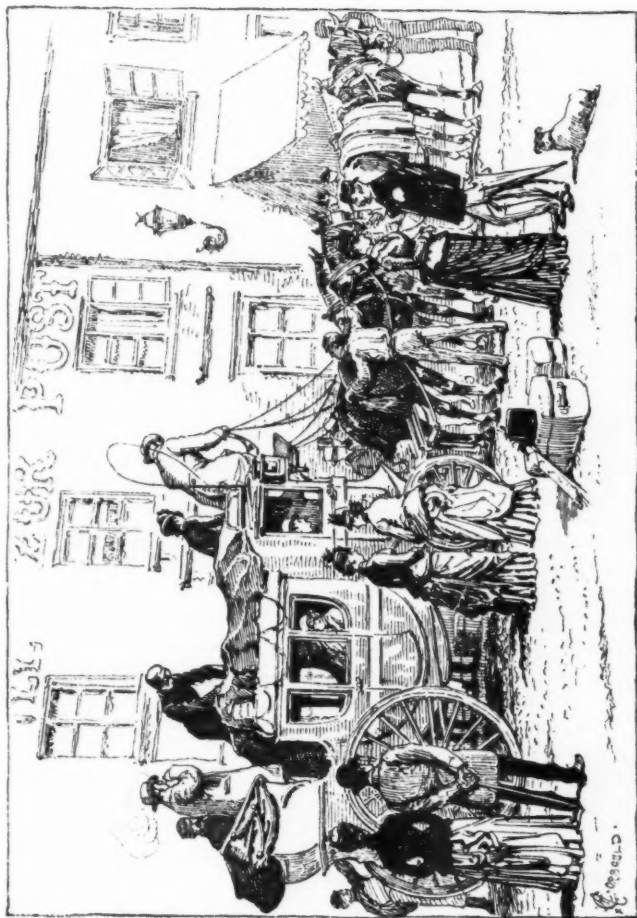
That they were newly married was in some way unmistakable. The horses were changed, and the coachman mounted his box ; and whether the cattle were fresh and impatient, or misunderstood, they set off. The gentleman was still in the inn, and so was the courier.

The horses scarcely advanced a yard before they were stopped, but it was sufficient to alarm the lady. To depart and leave the bridegroom behind would have been worse than the deluge ; and hastily putting her head out at the window she revealed her charms. They were not great : a pale face, with black eyes, and black hair that had become somewhat disarranged with travelling ; the voice, one of those husky voices so peculiar to foreign women, so rarely, if ever, heard in the English. She might have been about twenty, some ten years younger than the elaborately got up bridegroom : who, to do him justice was very good looking, but with that irritating barber's-block species of looks, and that inane, insipid expression, that make up a far less agreeable combination than sensible plainness.

He had evidently married her for *les beaux yeux de la cassette*. And we learned the history from Madame at the hotel, who happened to be a personal friend of the courier's.

It was a runaway match. Both, as it happened, were Protestant, and a Protestant minister had married them. She was enormously rich by virtue of her mother who was dead. He had simply been *Chef* in her father's house, a man whose riches were also enormous. She had foolishly become captivated by the good looks of the monarch of the kitchen, and offered him the monarchy of her heart instead. If she was not very beautiful there were unlimited golden compensa-

tions. The present result we have seen in the travelling carriage. But the future? Well, let us hope it will prove the one exception to the rule—and that the lady may not repent her folly—has not already repented.



DILIGENCE ARRIVING AT THE POST OFFICE, ST. MORITZ.

The carriage stopped in a moment, the bridegroom appeared, took his seat beside the bride, the courier mounted the box, and away they went.

We also took our departure; bade Madame farewell, praised her Asti, and passing down between the houses, found Muretti patiently

awaiting us: a much nobler specimen of mankind than our late bridegroom.

The shadows were lengthening and our road across the lake was direct and rapid. We landed, wished our boatman goodbye and continued success, and went our several ways: he to Campfer, we through the woody path to the Kurhaus. Gnats and mosquitoes were abroad in myriads, and we were glad to reach the open road.

Our last morning dawned: a brilliant sunrise, a cloudless sky. An early messenger had brought E. a magnificent bouquet of roses, from Herr von D., and flowers in the Engadine are worth their weight in gold. At ten o'clock the carriage came round; half the *personnel* of the hotel assembled to see us off: and as von D. handed E. to her seat, the band, as prophesied, struck up the National Anthem. The Grand Duke came on to his balcony to see what Royalty were arriving on whom he would have immediately to call, and was puzzled to find that only two quiet individuals were taking their leave.

Away dashed the postboy, and with a final and sorrowful wave to von D., we turned the corner and St. Moritz knew us no more.

We were returning on the Italian side, by way of Maloja, Promontogno, Chiavenna and Splügen—to Thusis: a wonderful drive and journey from beginning to end. St. Moritz disappeared in the distance, and we left not one regret behind, save and except parting with von D. We crossed the bridge over the Inn, at the foot of the path we had so often taken to the Alpina, and leaving that also behind us, went quickly up the road. Campfer in its turn was left behind, and as we passed, a large omnibus full of patients came down on its way to the delectable baths and waters. Next came Silvaplana, where only yesterday afternoon (it seemed ages ago) we had witnessed the little drama of the bride and bridegroom, heard their history, and quaffed our stirrup-cup. Here we halted a moment, according to promise, and Madame, on the watch, hastened out to wish us *Glückliche Reise*.

Then off again, up the lovely valley. The lakes sleeping in the hollow, with all their reflections; on either side, the wooded heights, mountains rising beyond them; on the left Silz Maria reposing in all its charm. We had never made that pilgrimage to the Fex Glacier with von D: never should now. Like many another thing it was put off from day to day until the time passed for ever.

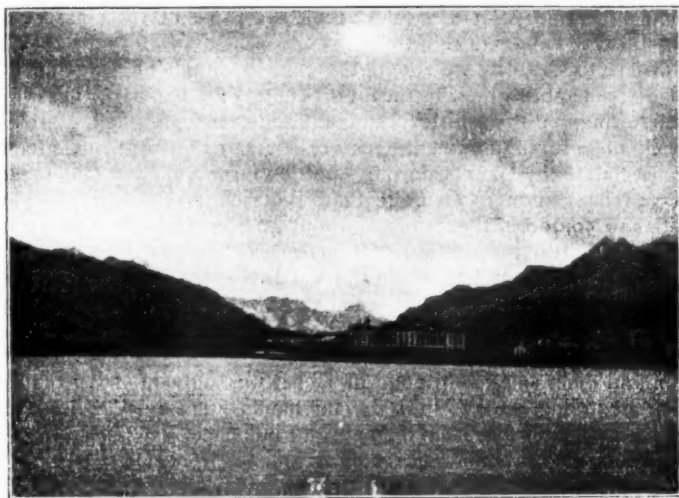
From this point the road seemed to grow in loveliness. We came to the Maloja lake, at the head of which stood the enormous hotel, with its 350 rooms, built by a Belgian Count, who appears to have ruined himself in the process, since it was taken in hand by his creditors. It has become a favourite resort of those who do not want baths and waters; and no wonder; for placed at the head of the pass it commands a magnificent situation.

Maloja itself is a mere village, overlooking the Val Bregaglia,

Here we said good-bye to the Engadine, and looking over Bregaglia, had our faces turned towards Italy: but the valley is in the Grisons Alps, and one reaches the Italian frontier only at Castasegna, some fourteen miles distant.

The summit of the Maloja Pass was green and beautiful, an exception to most summits. From the Engadine side, it seemed only a few feet above the lake; but to look down on the Bregaglia side was to command great depths: a scene so beautiful as to seem more a dream-world than reality. We stood at a height of 6,000 feet, and some 1,300 feet below us was Casaccia, reached by a series of wonderful zig-zigs or terraces, after the manner of such passes.

Here we waited a few minutes to rest the horses, admire the



MALOJA.

wonderful view, and visit the ruined church, one of the oldest in Switzerland. There are many excursions in the neighbourhood; many glaciers, many mountains to climb, of which one of the highest—the Piz della Margna, above Campfer—was in full view.

Looking into the Val Bregaglia we thought it one of the loveliest valleys of the world; closed in by high and precipitous walls of rock, that almost immediately opened out into slopes of the greatest luxuriance and fertility. It is, in fact, one of the most fertile of valleys, but its people are not romantic or ambitious; many of them emigrating in the humble capacity of chimney-sweepers!

As the carriage went winding down the terraces, we felt more and more as though bidding good-bye to high latitudes; and in one sense

it was so, for when we reached Promontogno instead of being 6,000 feet above the sea, we were something under 2,700.

All previous scenery was as nothing compared with this. Beside us ran the river; towering slopes green and luxuriant; a narrow plain richly cultivated; here and there a village or small settlement of white houses standing out from their green surroundings; many a small white gabled cottage far up the heights.

At Casaccia, the first large village, we had descended to some 4,700 feet above the sea. It lies at the junction of the path leading to the Septimer and Forcellina passes: the latter commanding a fine view of mountain peaks. The Septimer Pass was chiefly used in the Middle Ages, on the way to Italy. Between it and the Forcellina was a small hospice dedicated to St. Peter, founded in the twelfth century by the Bishop of Coire, and rebuilt as recently as the sixteenth century. Other routes took the place of these passes, and the hospice is now in ruins.

Close to Casaccia we found the ruined church of St. Gaudenzio, said to have been built in the fourth century: a few bare walls chiefly interesting for their history and antiquity, though much of it goes back only to the fourteenth century—just 1,000 years after its first consecration by Gaudenzio the Apostle of the valley. The Grisons have remained more Catholic than Protestant, some 40,000 of the latter to 50,000 of the former. About 40,000 speak German, 12,000 Italian, and the remainder the Romansch or Ladin dialect.

The whole air and aspect of the Val Bregaglia, even to the names of the villages, is Italian, and the character of the scenery had utterly changed from that of the Engadine. It was more laughing and luxuriant, far more beautiful, as though dwelling under a more golden sun and bluer skies. In point of fact it was only in 1512 that the Grisons during the war in Italy laid hands upon the Val Bregaglia; and it has never lost its Italian air and influence.

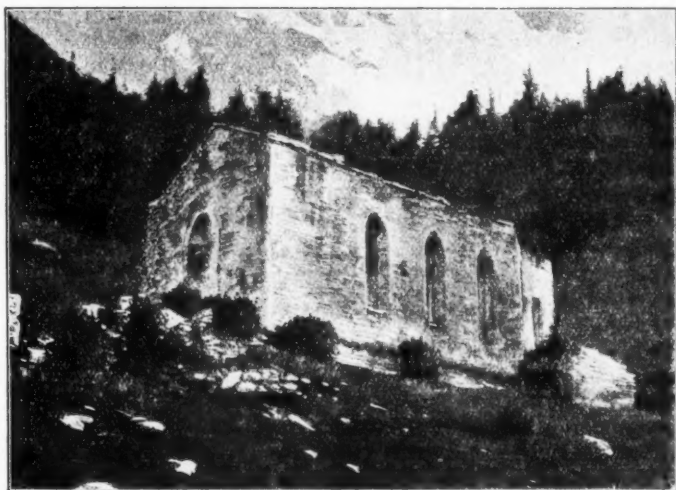
From Vico Soprano—reached through lovely forest paths: an ancient village of some 400 inhabitants, chiefly Protestant—some fine glacier excursions may be made; especially the Albigna Glacier, on the way to which one passes the Albigna torrent, one of the finest of the Alpine waterfalls.

Then came Borgonuovo and Stampa, where the valley was strewn with great rocks and boulders brought down from the mountain gorges by the great flood of 1870. To the left rose the splendid Pizzo della Duana, 10,000 feet high, its snow-white summit "cleaving the sky." At Stampa the aspect of the scenery again changes, for here the sombre pine gives place to the spreading chestnut, with all its beauty of form and foliage and flower.

About two o'clock we reached a point of the valley, where a bold, perpendicular and apparently impregnable rock confronted us, doubly crowned by a ruin and an evidently restored church. This rock, in the centre of the valley, dividing it in two, as it were,

formed a remarkable and striking scene. Almost immediately we entered a tunnel cut out of the rock, then swept round the road, and Promontogno stood before us: a rocky promontory stretching across the valley in all its romantic charm. Here we had decided to stay until Monday morning; the time passed as a dream, and as a dream we look back upon it when the months are fading into years.

From the first moment we had entered St. Moritz it repelled us: almost before we reached Promontogno we loved it. Not one of its least delights was its intense quiet and repose—a strange and startling contrast to the Kurhaus. We had the hotel almost to ourselves, and scarcely a sound disturbed its calm. Quite out of the ordinary run of hotels, it might have been built to suit the eccentric taste of some



RUINED CHURCH OF ST. GAUDENZIO.

private individual. This only added to its merit. The manager most attentive and obliging of mortals, searched for every opportunity to please us. It was a fairly large building painted white, with curious rooms and circular landings, some of the rooms possessing balconies, where you might listen to the flowing of the river, become lost and wrapt in the marvellous beauty of the scene, and dream of paradise.

St. Moritz fell away from us almost as one shakes off the influence of a nightmare, and we seemed to enter into infinite repose and beauty.

The Hotel Bregaglia was surrounded by its own gardens and orchard, in which one could sit or stroll at will. There were two distinct views from the windows, nay, three; and when the manager

bade us choose our rooms, it was an *embarras de richesses*. From one side we looked upon the matchless Valley, its wooded heights, all its splendid luxuriance, the far-flowing course of the river: an earthly paradise of the most enchanting description. From another part we looked upon the sloping rocky heights on which stood the picturesque little village of Promontogno, near to which is the village of Bondo: beyond it the opening of Val Bondasca, a narrow, romantic glen or gorge of extreme wildness, through which came a rushing torrent, turning a mill on its noisy way to the calmer waters of the Bregaglia. The gorge leads in time to the Bondasca Glacier, and the head of the glen is remarkable for its splendid granite peaks.

Again, from a third side of the hotel, crowning its rock, stood the ruined castle and restored church which had stared us so boldly in the face as we came down the valley; rising above the little houses of the village and almost throwing its shadow upon our inn.

The manager settled us in charming rooms; it appeared that he could not do sufficient to make our stay agreeable. After the crowd and noise of the Kurhaus, the delicious emptiness and repose of this large building seemed difficult to realise. We threw wide all the windows, opening to the ground on the French principle, and out on the balconies, in floods of sunshine, under the blue skies, looking over one of the loveliest valleys in the world, felt, and indeed were, in an enchanted country. The impression did not wear away, and the hours passed as a dream from which we had no wish to awaken.

About the village itself—including Bondo—perhaps there was not the same amount of glamour. Perched on a steep and rugged slope, its narrow streets were not very enticing, though from the distance even of a few hundred yards it looked everything that was picturesque and beautiful, and in point of situation was ideally romantic. But its people were very much like other people, poor and industrious and uninteresting. The most picturesque point of all was the mill-wheel, turned by the torrent rushing from the glen to the river. Inside one heard the sawing of wood, and a wholesome and fragrant scent of pine sawdust was shed abroad upon the air.

Not far off was the small church, filled on Sundays with people from Promontogno and the neighbouring villages. They come in little groups, and make the dusty white roads picturesque with their costumes.

"And they are very good people on the whole," said Herr Joseph, our major-domo. "Many of them have all the superstition of the Roman Catholics: would not miss going to mass on Sunday for anything, but are not quite so particular as to what they do on Monday. I am a Protestant myself; a follower of that splendid man Zwingli, the apostle of modern times, as it seems to me; and I cannot conceive a finer character, or one more worthy of treading in the footsteps of St. Paul. You wonder to hear an hotel-keeper talking in this strain, signor, it may be; but why not? Those who

have gone through as much as I have will not set too great a store by the things of this world. He will do his duty with might and main, and if success comes, well and good ; but the hour-glass of life is always running on, and by-and-by runs out, and so why care too much for the things that must after all come to an end ? I always say, the first law of life is, Do your duty ; and I would add, avoid useless sorrow and calmly accept the inevitable. Do not joy overmuch, and do not sorrow overmuch. It is all a mistake. For by-and-by man folds his hands for the last time, and says to himself, 'I need not have worried. I, even as others, have reached the end of my pilgrimage. An easy life or a hard one, poverty or riches, it is all one now.' That was practically Zwingli's creed ; not



VAL BREGAGLIA.

altogether, because his life was based upon a firm reliance on God's overruling providence. Nothing happened by chance. I have called him the Apostle of modern times, but after all he belonged to the strong middle ages, and his influence is felt amongst us to-day. Yes, signor, his works have followed him."

This conversation, or rather monologue, took place in the evening. We were on the balcony, overlooking the marvellous view. The sun was fast declining, and everything seemed bathed in the rosy tints of sunset, a rare celestial light. Above us was the deep blue of an Italian sky ; that wonderfully clear atmosphere of which we know nothing in our insular retirement. The wooded slopes had gained in depth ; the sparkle had left the river, which now ran in a long silent stream far down the valley. It was the eve of the Sabbath, and

already there seemed a sabbath stillness in the air, which possibly had given a colouring to our good manager's thoughts and conversation.

Herr Joseph was thin, wiry, almost cadaverous, who looked as though every day with him was a fast day; but he was endowed with energy, activity, and cheerfulness, and his pale, narrow face and large dark eyes were full of life. He had come to us on the balcony after our light but admirably served dinner to ask us if we had been pleased, and to offer his services if he could in any way be useful: and we found him both intelligent and thoughtful.

"You have just mentioned the Middle Ages," we said; "and they were, as you observe, strong and great times. Its men left their mark upon the world not in religion only, but in other things—their fine churches and great buildings above all. There were giants in those days."

"Giants indeed, though we have few traces here of their power," returned Herr Joseph. "The oldest inhabited building is the old Château in the village of Bondo belonging to the de Salis', but it only goes back to the seventeenth century. If you have not seen it you must do so to-morrow; it is worth visiting, without being of great merit. The ruin of Castelmur, which confronted you coming down the valley, is older. But it is a ruin only. You would notice the donjon, and the walls ten feet thick, which dip into the valley and are washed by the waters of the river. The pilgrimage church by the side of the ruins is as old as they are, or older. Pilgrims came to it in the Middle Ages, and still come a little, to ask miracles of 'Nossa Donna,' to whom it is dedicated. It was desecrated by the Protestants in 1552, and brought pretty well to ruin. Ah, signor, there has been bigotry on both sides, and all we can say for the Protestants is that after all they were in the right. If they persecuted, it was in God's service, though it was a mistaken way of doing Him honour. But the Catholics?—they persecuted out of vindictiveness; out of sheer cruelty, like that awful Catherine de Medici; out of love of power and wealth: not for the sake of Right. The persecutions were all for self. There lies the difference, but a difference separated by a mighty chasm!"

"And the church you speak of as ruined—it is no longer a ruin?"

"Oh, no, signor. It was restored in 1839 by the Baron von Castelmur, to whom it belongs. The good baron has long gone to his rest, and one hardly knows his motive for the restoration. It is too high up for people to go to as a regular thing. The steep climb is fatiguing, half inaccessible; people from far and near attend the parish church. It may be that he hoped to restore the pilgrimages, which would indirectly benefit the village and add to the value of his property. One does not know, and I would not suggest mercenary motives which perhaps never existed. Only, signor, self is at the bottom of so many of our actions. Alas, I know it only too well by my own heart. People say that I am obliging and attentive: and I

ask myself sometimes whether it is out of love for mankind that I am so, or only to make my hotel popular. The human heart is deceitful."

Herr Joseph was so thoroughly in earnest, so anxious for a solution to this grave problem, that it was impossible to help smiling. His large dark eyes looked down the valley and searched the sky as though he would there find the answer.

"Your motive is twofold," we replied. "In making your visitors comfortable you feel you are doing your duty, and making your house popular. But that is not your chief desire. A reader of faces will tell you that your dominant expression is a kindly feeling towards your fellow-men. You think more of their comfort and



PROMONTOGNO, SHOWING HOTEL.

welfare than of your own. That is a true doctrine of Zwingli who took for one of his rules in life, 'Look not every man on his own things but on the things of others': a doctrine as difficult to follow as the taming of the tongue."

"I would fain think so," returned Herr Joseph, uncertain whether to smile or sigh; "fain believe you a true reader; but on this occasion," shaking his head, "I fear that you have made a mistake. Look, signor," changing the subject and pointing to the heights; "up there lies Soglio; ancient Soglio; a thousand feet above us; with its old château going back to the fourteenth century—the very beginning of that century—though much has been destroyed. The great palace was sacked and burnt by the Spaniards in 1621: about the time, you know, of that terrible massacre of the Protestants in

the Valley : a small St. Bartholomew. There you must go to-morrow for an afternoon promenade. The old château is now an inn and you can eat fruit in the old garden under the very shadow of the Middle Ages. No one will molest you. As you see by these empty rooms and silent corridors, this is not quite our season—or," he smiled, "my attentions to my visitors would have brought forth little fruit."

He left us to attend to other duties, and in the glorious evening light we strolled down the road beside the river, the depths of the sky reflected upon its surface; the woods on either side growing darker, the landscape gradually blotting itself out. Then came night and the stars flashing in all their brilliancy. The whole place seemed deserted; we met no one, heard no sound but the onward flowing of the river. Even in the darkness, the charm made itself felt: the solemn outlines of the hills, the silence of the wooded slopes, the quiet flowing of the water. One never lost the sense of being in an earthly paradise.

The next morning told a somewhat different tale. It was still a calm quiet scene, but with evidences of humanity. In Bondo many of the villagers were strolling about, or standing outside their doors, dressed in their best, and looking very much as if they hardly knew how to kill time. People arrived in small groups to church; the place was comparatively lively. All were dressed in their Sunday costumes, and some looked decidedly picturesque as they gathered round the church porch waiting the moment to enter.

The old château was closed, and a young man came up with the keys, opened doors and shutters, and evidently felt very proud of his task. To him the old château was the realisation of all that was regal and magnificent: he could conceive nothing beyond.

The splendours were rather conspicuous by their absence, but the house was distinctly quaint and interesting. A fine staircase dignified the hall, further decorated by some old armour; and some good old portraits hung upon the walls. The rooms were large, the corridors wide: a place that might be haunted by an interesting ghost in powdered hair and sacque; one could pass very pleasantly a summer watching for her; but its situation, in a poor little narrow thoroughfare, surrounded by the village houses, was against it, and certainly not suggestive of the supernatural.

To-day, if possible, we thought Promontogno lovelier than ever. It seemed to change from beauty to beauty with every hour; we still felt in a dream-world.

The day was so intensely hot that after luncheon we had a serious consultation as to whether it would be possible to walk to Soglio without risking one's life. E. looked anxious; gazed at the sky, looked over the valley, glanced at her complexion. Nothing could be more delicate and satisfactory, but what would it be after climbing 1,000 feet? A momentous question.

We suggested a carriage; E. objected.

"If we go at all I would rather take my courage in both hands and walk," she said. "Let us make the attempt; one can but die once; or if it proves too much we will return."

Nevertheless we made a private inquiry and found a carriage was not to be had.

"But you must see Soglio, and you will not find the walk difficult," said the manager. "The zigzags up the hillside are not steep, and are very much shaded by trees."

So we ventured forth, E. carefully adjusting her sunshade.

"It seems quite strange to be without Herr von D.," she remarked, "and I think he must be quite lost without us. Why do you not



VAL BREJAGLIA, NEAR PROMONTIGNO.

adopt his plan and carry a white umbrella? Foreigners are so much more sensible than Englishmen in these matters."

But we could not screw up our courage to the white umbrella point: a reversal of the French proverb: *Il faut souffrir pour être beau.*

Crossing the bridge that spanned the river, we went down the long white road; the music of the stream keeping us company until we reached the beginning of the fatal zigzag.

The anxiety on E.'s face deepened. She began a list of her treasures and how they were to be disposed of, in case the worst happened. To herself she left a book she had once bought at a second-hand bookstall, called "*Unregenerate Man.*"

"I do not mean to say it is needed," she kindly volunteered;

"but one never knows. It is best to be provided against every emergency."

"Have you read it?" we asked humbly.

"No," she replied; "how could 'Unregenerate Man' apply to me? I bought it to keep against a fitting opportunity of bestowing it judiciously."

After duly admiring her beneficent intentions we began to climb upwards. If the terraces were not steep they were interminably long. But Herr Joseph had not exaggerated the beauty of the walk. In spite of the intense heat, once set out, it was impossible to turn back. The zig-zags had been cut through a pine wood, and between them the trees still raised their fringed tops and threw their shadows athwart the winding terraces. We climbed upwards by slow degrees, and as we mounted and looked back, the view grew ever more grand and glorious. At last, when we were beginning to think that we should have to give up this will-o'-the-wisp chase after Soglio—so often had we thought the next turn must be the last—Soglio came into view: as the sight of water to the parched soul crossing the desert—and only just in time.

"I can no more," E. had said more than once—her favourite expression, which we always declared she had taken from *Jephtha*.

And we had replied: "A little more effort à la 'Dombey & Son.' Why, oh why, did you refuse a carriage?"

"You know quite well there was none to be had," returned E. "I heard Herr Joseph tell you so as I passed up the staircase. You were turned from me and did not see or hear me. And perhaps I have some ghostly attributes and can make myself invisible. Besides, driving is too commonplace; whereas we shall remember this walk and its beauty all our lives. The heat and fatigue will be forgotten, the charm never."

"And the complexion?"

"I have Herr von D.'s authority for saying it cannot be spoilt," laughed E.

It was a charm, indeed, that walk, that whole afternoon. When we first came in sight of Soglio, it looked a village perched on the side of a precipice, and one wondered what kept it in position. On reaching it we found there was good standing room, though none too much. Here it has stood for centuries; and here nearly three hundred years ago, the Spaniards swarmed up the height and burnt and sacked the village. It is still very beautiful and picturesque; the most commonplace outlines would be so in such a position—and Soglio was not commonplace.

We soon discovered the inn that had once been the home of the de Salis family. The Spaniards could not have destroyed all, for much remains.

This rambling old house alone would repay a longer and more difficult climb than we had taken to-day. We passed up a wonderful

old staircase straight into the old-fashioned garden, where we sank into the first available seat, feeling very much as one who, after battling with the waves for days, finds himself rescued by a life-boat.

It was an old-fashioned stone table that might have belonged to the Druids once upon a time, and an old-fashioned stone seat of about the same period. Everything about the place, indeed, was old and old-fashioned: nothing more so than the quaint garden, full of sweet-smelling flowers, of fruit trees whose branches bent with their weight of rich ripe cherries.

An attentive handmaiden of great discrimination marshalled us into the garden, did not wait for any orders, but, seeing our exhausted condition, rapidly disappeared and almost as rapidly returned with a



PROMONTOGNO.

supply of sparkling Asti, and filling two tumblers presented them to us with a graceful little curtsy: bringing to mind our Friday's adventure: our stirrup-cup with Herr von D., the drama of the bride and bridegroom, and Muretti the boatman.

To-day, after our long climb, the Asti was nectar, worth its weight in gold. Under its influence we speedily revived, and felt ready for a second adventure, provided we found the same reward at the end.

We wandered about the garden, lost in a paradise of flowers: passing under drooping cherry-boughs, standing lost in amazement before the currant and gooseberry bushes—the largest red currants and gooseberries, and the sweetest, we had ever seen or tasted.

"You may pick all the fruit," said the handmaiden, a daughter

of the house, and dressed in a most becoming Italian costume. "You may pick all the fruit," throwing wide her arms; "it is all ripe, and all yours. And I will gather a large bouquet of roses and lilies for the lady. She is very much like a lily. In Italy we are not so fair and tall."

If we had accepted her invitation, and picked all the fruit, it would have required at least three Pantehnicon vans to carry it away; and we satisfied ourselves with strict moderation. To look at this abundance of fruit, was almost better than to eat. The whole garden up that mountain height, under those deep blue skies, was a picture the eye could not be satisfied with seeing: an intensity of beauty difficult to grasp, as well as infinite repose. What a new world it was after the Engadine and St. Moritz, with its noisy crowd and restless atmosphere.

"One almost feels," said E., "as if this would have been more health-restoring than St. Moritz, and certainly more conducive to repose of spirit. This is a dream of paradise, and we should have had the hotel all to ourselves."

But that was a slight mistake, as we presently found.

"We had our compensations at St. Moritz," we returned. "Our coffee excursions; Silz Maria and Silvaplana and the lakes; the companionship of von D. A month of this utter solitude would be a little trying."

"I have not experienced it," said E., "but could never imagine it anything but lovely and charming."

Our picturesque handmaiden appeared upon the scene, in her graceful Italian costume, and seeing us in a distant path embowered amidst rose trees and cherry boughs, approached.

"The signor and the lady would like to see over the house. It was very old and quaint and quite worth a visit."

This was evident even from where we stood. Massive grey walls confronted us, windows barred and ironed as though in the past centuries there had been fair ladies to keep within bounds or prisoners of war to retain as hostages. These walls seemed made to defy time. Only the lapse of ages could have given them the deep cold grey that seemed to wrap them in an atmosphere of the past and whisper to the beholder that they belonged to a day in which he had no part or lot; had seen sights and heard secrets never to be recorded.

In the garden was an old grey sundial that also might have belonged to the Druids, and certainly was contemporary with the palace. The sunshine falling upon it marked the hour—half-past three. How many hours had it marked in its lifetime—how many generations seen come and go?

"Your hotel is wonderful even from here," we remarked; "and you seem to have it all to yourselves."

"Not quite," replied Anastasia, for such we found was her name.

"For the last fortnight we have had an American family with us; father, mother, and one daughter. They have our best and most curious rooms; but I have asked permission, and they beg that you will look at them freely."

So we followed our guide, whose appearance so wonderfully matched the garden, and entered the house: entered at the first floor, after the fashion of houses built on slopes. It was the way we had approached the garden, and ascending another short flight of stairs—stairs of ancient carved oak worth a king's ransom—found ourselves in a large square panelled landing or corridor, centuries old, the tone of the old oak exquisite. Here and there small wooden



PROMONTOGNO.

columns reached to the panelled ceiling, and large oaken doors, splendidly carved and panelled, admitted to rooms beyond.

At one of these large doors our *châtelaine* for the time-being knocked gently. It was immediately opened and a gentleman appeared and begged us to enter. An American, as Anastasia had said, full of kindly courtesy: such as one would like to think it possible for all Americans to be. His wife, who had not been well, was reposing, but was leaving her room, and we might then inspect it.

The rooms were indeed remarkable, and panelled throughout, and the ceilings were all of old carved oak. Here was tapestry and there silken hangings of a long past period, with furniture to correspond. The windows were leaded, and the walls were substantial: a mediæval atmosphere, with nothing to break the illusion. We remarked as much.

"That is exactly what we have felt," said our host of the moment. "And to us the charm is twofold, since we have nothing of the sort in America. Of course we envy you all your refinements," he added with a smile; "all your old-world atmosphere; your titles, ancient pedigrees, ancestral halls, aristocracy. We envy all, whatever we may say; and are doing our best to rob you of your heirlooms: your best pictures and objects of vertu: paying fabulous prices for them; so that if we cannot have your halls and pedigrees, we can at least decorate our homes with the best of your genius. A makeshift if you will, but a very pleasant one. And we give our millions that our daughters may have the reality and marry your titles."

"And you have been staying here a whole fortnight, and have not grown weary of solitude?" we remarked.

"Quite the opposite," was the reply. "It has been one of the pleasantest fortnights of our lives. We have had our books, taken numberless sketches, sat in the old garden and enjoyed the sunshine, have discovered the loveliest walks, revelled in the perfect quiet and repose; and always returned to the mediæval atmosphere of our rooms with fresh delight. The people of the hotel are wonderfully attentive, feed us admirably, and charge us only too modestly. We mean to spend another fortnight with them."

"There is a strange feeling about the rooms," we observed; "a sort of mysterious atmosphere, as if the place were haunted."

"You notice it," cried our host, whose name we did not learn; "I am delighted, for I felt it the very first hour of our arrival. I was certain there was something uncanny about the place, and made no doubt it was haunted. I must tell you that I am a firm believer in ghosts; have seen several, as clearly and as certainly as I now see you. I am not in the least afraid of them," he laughed, "and if a whole host appeared before me, should calmly ask them to sit down and make themselves at home. I shall be a ghost myself some day, and like to feel that I may revisit the scenes of my earthly pilgrimage, and appear to some of my old friends without filling them with horror."

"But what has been your experience here? Have you seen any ghosts?"

"The impression that the place was haunted grew and grew," returned the American, whom, for want of better knowledge, we will call Mr. X. "I became more and more convinced that our atmosphere was charged with the supernatural element. For the first week I saw nothing, but I heard mysterious sounds that were certainly not of human agency. Doors that we closed were opened; once a coverlet was pulled off the bed; on two occasions I distinctly heard breathings, but saw nothing, heard no footstep. Then one night, just six days ago, I awoke suddenly in my room. What awoke me I could not tell, but I was at once in full possession of my senses. That strange feeling of a supernatural atmosphere was on me

more strongly than ever. The moonlight streaming into the room through the leaded panes traced lovely pictures upon the bare old oak floor. It was almost light: that strange uncanny light that most nearly approaches that poet's light 'that never was on land or sea.' In this light I distinctly saw——"

"A ghost?" interrupted E. with subdued excitement.

"Yes, madam," replied Mr. X. with a bow. "A ghost, or what we call a ghost for want of a better name. But it was more than a ghost, it was two ghosts. I saw them distinctly, walking to and fro, and as they passed in and out of the moonlight, noticed that the tracing on the floor was never dimmed or obliterated: they threw no shadow. Both were young, and dressed in the fashion of the seventeenth century. She seemed to be protesting, pleading; on



BONDO.

her beautiful face was the misery of despair; on his a cruel, malignant determination. The face was almost fiendish in expression. She would inevitably plead in vain. Suddenly they paused in the moonlight; she sank upon her knees lifting imploring hands. He bent over her, his arm raised, in his hand the gleam of steel. In a moment it descended upon the young girl—she looked scarce twenty—a piercing scream went through the room and seemed to find its echoes in the corridors below, and the whole thing vanished. My wife, who was lying beside me, heard nothing, was not awakened. I was not in the least alarmed or even flurried. I lay there quietly, wide awake, watching, listening, but nothing more happened."

"And have you seen and heard nothing since?" asked E., who

occasionally sleeps in a room once occupied by Charles II, and declares she hears mysterious sounds though she has never actually seen anything. She was consequently profoundly interested in this ghost-story of the old Soglio palace.

"Yes, the night before last, just at the same hour and under the same conditions, the whole scene was repeated," replied Mr. X. "Again I was suddenly aroused; again was wide awake and in full possession of my senses. Once more the knife came down upon the victim, and the shriek went wailing through the corridors. I had carefully closed our bedroom door—it was now open. That that scene actually took place in the past centuries; that a foul murder was committed and never avenged; I am as persuaded as that we are here at this moment."

"And probably the skeleton lies buried under the house, in unconsecrated ground," said E., pale and large-eyed.

"More probably lies in some secret recess, never discovered and never disturbed since that day," returned Mr. X. "The walls are all panelled; there must here and there be sliding panels and secret chambers. No house built in those lawless times—500 years ago—was ever without them. I have not examined the walls, but we may be sure that behind some of these hangings are unknown recesses. It is the strangest, most picturesque, most ghostly old house I was ever in. A ghostly situation too! hanging between heaven and earth, like Mahomet's coffin."

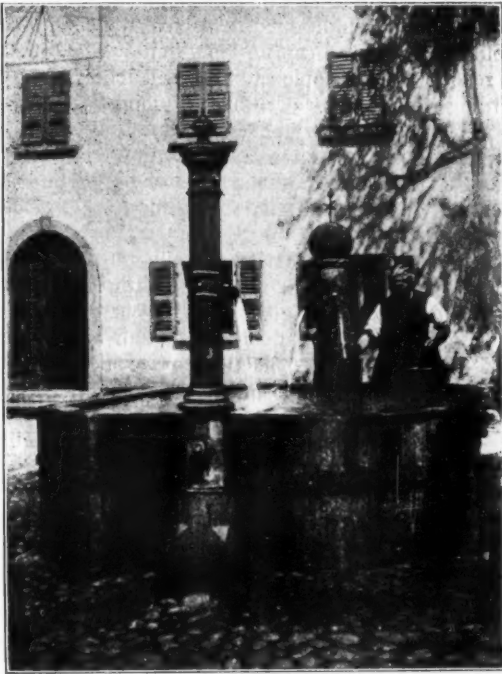
Mr. X. himself looked almost as though he belonged more to the other world than to this, and might almost have acted the part of a ghost. If they appeared to anyone in the flesh, surely it would be to such as he. Thin to the point almost of emaciation, nothing but the brightness of his eye and the healthy tone of his complexion saved him from being put down as in the very last stage of consumption.

"I read your thoughts," he said with a smile as we looked at him. "They are naturally suggested by my appearance. I am not in a consumption, but strong and healthy; the truth being that I live upon almost nothing. Every day with me is a fast, and yet I take all I need, never feel the pangs of hunger, should be ill if I took more. Fasting with me is no laceration of the flesh, but the opposite."

"And yet you said just now that they fed you admirably in the hotel?"

"So they do," he laughed, "but I did not say that I indulged in all they provided. My wife and daughter, however, are more human, and in moderation enjoy the good things of life—as they were intended to be enjoyed. On me they would be wasted. I live upon fruit and toast and plain water: and often think of those sacred words in the New Testament: *This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting*. If I chose to cultivate it, I am quite sure that I should see visions

and dream dreams, and I do possess in a very strong degree the gift of second sight. I do not desire it and repress it as far as possible. It will, however, assert itself to a certain extent. For example, this your visit was distinctly foreshadowed to me yesterday morning. I saw it all, went through it all, and when I met you I recognised you at once. If you ask me *Cui bono*? I am silent; I cannot answer you: but I am not aware that there need be any special motive for every vision seen by those who possess second sight. It really is a part of themselves, and sometimes the visions



BONDO.

have an object to be fulfilled, and sometimes they have none. I can give no other explanation. We see the visions—we do not understand them, nor the power within us that causes them. I consider them due to a spark of divine inspiration, taking the form of sight, not of language."

After a little more "ghostly" conversation we took our leave and went back to the garden, where Anastasia brought us delicious coffee and placed it upon the old Druidical table, together with tempting dishes of rich ripe fruit. Then going down one of the paths, rather

to our horror she broke off a small bough and offered it to us, laden with large red cherries.

"It will only improve the tree," she said, in answer to a word of regret; "things grow so quickly here, and in such abundance."

Then a bell rang out and seemed to echo through all the air and up the wooded slopes.

"It is from the church," said Anastasia. "There is a sermon this afternoon; we do not often have sermons."

"But why are you not there, Anastasia, to profit by the sermon?" Anastasia laughed and coloured.

"I am young, Signore. It will be time enough for me to think of sermons when I am middle-aged, and have the cares and worries of a household upon me, and can no longer enjoy life."

"Does religion make people sad and melancholy, Anastasia?"

"According to the curé we are always doing wrong," she retorted. "It is always confession and penance; one feels hampered at every turning; sees evil in everything. Now I enjoy life, but I never think any evil, and I am not aware that I ever do anything very wrong. The Signor must see that to be always calling white black is the way to make it black in the end."

Here her mother's voice was heard calling to her, and Anastasia, graceful and picturesque, with her polite little curtsy, disappeared through the old doorway. We were left to our coffee and fruit and the solitude of the lovely garden. It was an earthly paradise, and we sat and dreamed dreams, as though we had eaten the Lotus flower.

"E," we said presently, half ashamed of the question, and putting it somewhat in fear and trembling: "do you quite believe in that ghost-story?"

"Implicitly," replied E. with reproach. "You cannot listen to Mr. X., or look at him, without feeling absolutely persuaded of his truth and good faith."

"But he may be himself deceived?"

"That is not possible," returned E. "You heard him say how he saw us in a vision yesterday, and recognised you to-day—there could be no fancy or illusion about that. Neither is there any about his ghostly visitations."

"Certainly he is half a ghost himself: that may somewhat explain matters. But don't you think his ghost story a little conventional?"

E. would admit nothing. "Not at all," she answered; "not in the least. Actions in real life repeat themselves. If a murder is committed in the ordinary way, that ordinary way and none other must be reflected in the gestures of the ghosts, if they subsequently appear. On the contrary, I thought the ghost story quite thrilling and romantic. The whole place, the whole air, seems charged with electricity. In those quaint and delightful rooms I almost expected to see the arras move aside, sliding panels open and ghosts come

forth. I don't in the least see why they should confine themselves to the witching hour. Nor do they. It is only that those who see them are more attuned to the influence when the world is at rest: the hubble-bubble of life is hushed. If the Americans were not in possession, I really would ask you to break our journey and spend a week here. Who knows what we might not learn of the unseen and spiritual? I might even grow into a Seer myself; and then I am quite sure the ghost of Elizabeth would appear to me when we pay that promised visit to Heidelberg."

"It is not a healthy influence, my dear E. In this life, cultivate the spiritual as much as you like, but not the ghostly. It might unfit us for our duties."



CHIAVENNA.

"You need not fear for me," laughed E. "I think ghost-stories very interesting—who does not who possesses a spark of imagination?—but I shall never become morbid about them. The only ghost I am really anxious to receive in audience is my dear Elizabeth of Bohemia."

"And what about her brother?"

"Charles? Oh, no! he might appear with his head under his arm! No;" with a shudder, "that would be too dreadful. I might not survive the impression."

The afternoon shadows were lengthening when we had gained courage to leave this earthly paradise. Anastasia had flitted to and fro, offering us quiet attentions. She had evidently fallen in love with E. and wished to testify her admiration and esteem as far as

possible. The bouquet of roses she presented would have ruined any other garden but this, in which nature had so asserted her right to be prodigal of her gifts. It naturally fell to our lot to carry it, and we thankfully remembered that the way was down hill.

"If the Signor will come and stay with us, we will do our very utmost," said Anastasia, as we prepared to leave.

"It shall be another year, Anastasia; this year we are bound elsewhere. You must promise that we shall have the hotel to ourselves, and you must give us all those wonderful old rooms."

Anastasia was ready to sign an agreement there and then that our will should be law in all things. She and her mother accompanied us to the threshold, and in the old doorway made a very pretty picture; the mother a counterpart of the daughter, ante-dated by some five-and-twenty years, which had left her still comely and kindly.

We turned and glanced up at the leaded windows with their stone mullions. Mr. X., happening to be looking out, bowed politely by way of farewell; looking so cadaverous and diaphanous behind those weird old casements that we might have been forgiven had we gone away and declared we had seen a ghost in very truth. Many a ghost-story has had less foundation.

The walk back to Promontogno in the cooler hours of the afternoon was delightful, with a sun sinking westward, a rosy golden glow spreading itself over the sky, the wooded slopes tinged with warm light. A flush lay upon the river, shadows crept over the fields beyond. We have no such effects in good old England as we occasionally see under an Italian sky.

"This is almost the loveliest evening I ever remember," said E. "Such an evening as must have given rise to the saying *couleur de rose*, when all goes well and earth is a paradise."

"Is it not a fools' paradise at the best?"

"No," replied E. "I can never admit that. Taken in the right way, it seems to me that this world may be a true ante-room to the paradise to come. It entirely depends upon ourselves."

The hotel stood before us on a gentle eminence, as we went up the dusty white road, and beside it the picturesque bridge spanned the river. Beyond all rose the bold rock, church and castle crowned, cleaving the valley. To the right, on the rugged rocky promontory was the village, with its wild glen and its rushing waterfall. Before we reached it all the light was fading into twilight; everything was taking a deeper tone; "a sense of mystery the spirit daunted"; absolute silence everywhere—the Sabbath stillness that, whether fact or fancy, so often seems, in quiet groves, to specially mark the Day of Rest.

"I told you Soglio was not to be overlooked," said Herr Joseph, delighted with the success of our expedition. "But I never heard of the ghost before. Probably the people of the house know nothing about it. The power of hearing and seeing ghosts is limited to a few

individuals. If any place can be haunted, it surely is that old palace in the hills. Now, Signor, you will place yourselves at table. My chef has prepared you his most *recherché* little dinner."

E. looked at us in mute appeal. "We have been living in paradise, feasting on nectar and ambrosia," she murmured. "Now I suppose we must submit to be brought back to earth."

Perhaps it was not so terrible, after all. Crystallized violets and butterflies' wings are all very well in theory, but break down in



SPLÜGEN.

practice. Herr Joseph's good intentions and the chef's best efforts were not thrown away.

After the stars had come out, in the night coolness and the night stillness, we went up the road into the village. All was calm and quiet; the little streets were deserted; the old château was shuttered, barred and bolted; given up to the bats and the ghosts—and for our part, of the two we would rather have the ghosts. Here and there a light gleamed in a window, but for the most part everything was in darkness. Nothing disturbed the calm and quiet but the sound of the rushing waterfall. The heights towering above the village were

dark and impenetrable. Above, the stars shone and flashed in the dark, blue sky with all the silent mystery that lies between the worlds, and is never broken and is never bridged.

The next morning we bade a reluctant farewell to Promontogno. It was extremely difficult to leave it. No place visited since we had lost sight of the white cliffs of England had so won upon our affections: not even Heidelberg with all its splendours past and present. Here we were so utterly out of the world, in one of its loveliest nooks, without a single jarring note of discord.

"You will come again, Signor," said Herr Joseph, as he accompanied us to the carriage. "If you only give me due notice my best rooms shall be at your disposal, and my best attentions at your service."

We promised, wind and weather permitting; as far as we had the ordering of our lives; man can only propose.

Herr Joseph had found us the best coachman and the best carriage in the place, and our drive began under the happiest auspices. The air flashed with sunshine, the skies were blue and radiant. Yes, there are times and seasons when earth can be a paradise.

It was to be a long day's drive: a drive of at least ten hours, ending at Splügen. Our coachman was young and energetic, and the horses, with the previous day's rest, were fresh and willing.

Down the white road we had walked yesterday we went to-day, beside the sparkling, murmuring river. It was quite a painful ordeal to pass the turning leading to Soglio and the ghost, the old palace-inn, the wonderful garden, and the attentive Anastasia. The little out-of-the-world settlement seemed to divide our affections with Promontogno: and having passed it we passed into an unknown world.

A world that lost nothing of its loveliness. At Castasegna we entered Italy proper. The custom-house officers in their light blue clothes flashed and fussed about as though we had been a whole caravanserai; and because we had nothing to declare and no duty to pay, they kept us waiting nearly half-an-hour.

We were off again at last, and went our downward way through the valley. Anything richer and more splendid than the foliage could not be imagined. Outlines and undulations of the hills, clear cut against the sky, were perfect; whilst here and there a picturesque village, now really Italian, added its charm of life and movement to the scene.

Presently we passed the spot—one of the loveliest parts of the valley—where once stood Piuro, with its 3,000 inhabitants, rich, flourishing, *insouciant*. They had received many warnings without heeding them. Only the burnt child dreads the fire. Monte Conto, the great mountain opposite, had spoken many a time for ten long years by cracks and crevices. The day before the dread event great masses of rock fell; cattle flew away in terror, but the people remained. Then the great mountain fell, Piuro was buried, and not one of the 3,000 inhabitants escaped to tell the tale. This happened on the night of September 4, 1618.

It was impossible to look at this spot, now overgrown with woods, without special interest and sadness: for though nearly three centuries have passed over that living tomb, one realises all the horror of the catastrophe as though it had happened yesterday.

Three miles further on we reached Chiavenna, the first real town we had seen for many a long day. Its situation is perfect from a picturesque point of view, and the surrounding hills are especially beautiful in outline; but as we went through the narrow streets, it seemed that, given a week in Chiavenna, one would die of enervation. The town lies in a hollow, under the very shadow of its wooded heights, where the valley of St. Giacomo meets the Val Bregaglia. The sun poured down his intense rays, and the streets resembled a



THE RHINE AT SPLÜGEN.

huge hot-house or furnace. The town was thoroughly Italian and very picturesque; dating back to the fourth century, and taking its place in history.

In 1797 Napoleon annexed it to the Cisalpine Republic. In the earlier centuries it was a bone of contention between the Bishop of Coire and the City of Como, until it fell to the Dukes of Milan and remained theirs until, in 1512, the Grisons took possession of it, together with Valtellino and Bormio. The Congress of Vienna transferred it to Austria, and in 1859 it became—what it ought to be—Italian.

We were not sorry to pass out of this fiery furnace into the valley beyond, where, if the atmosphere was only a little cooler, at least it was pure.

We were now travelling under very different conditions. The beauty and luxuriance of the Val Bregaglia had given place to the desolation of the Valley of the Liro. The little river ran over its rocky bed between rocky mountains, high, wild and barren. As far as Chiavenna our way had been all down hill: now we were once more to ascend through this Valley of Desolation.

Yet its wild grandeur was full of beauty: a deep grey tone mixing with the sparkle of the white kneiss of which the hills are largely composed, which appeared to throw out a certain effulgence, and absorb a little of the brilliancy of the blue sky and sunshine. The valley was strewn with fallen rocks, for the white kneiss is especially brittle, so that the scene often looked like a gigantic ruin: the ruin of some pre-historic world, in which not one stone had been left upon another.

A pleasant break in this barren wilderness was the appearance of the white campanile of the church of Madonna di Gallivaggio, overlooking precipices and surrounded by woods of flourishing chestnuts and slender pines: a veritable oasis in a rocky desert.

For miles afterwards the road went back to its desolate aspect, until at last a sharp descent brought us into the wide plains and the village of Campo Dolcino, reposing on the banks of the Liro.

Here we had to wait two hours to rest the horses. The situation of the village left nothing to be desired; the village itself was somewhat poverty stricken. High, barren mountains surrounded it, but the plain was green and somewhat marshy, and the Liro, shallow and noisy, was not confined to narrow limits.

The *Post* was a primitive inn, but by no means deserted. In the dining-room was quite a large assembly; people who laughed and talked loudly, and were dressed, many of them, in curious costumes. We ordered luncheon, and walked about the village, and strolled through the plain, and sat on great boulders where the river almost washed our feet, listening to its eternal story and the songs it sang of its youth: those far distant times, when, it may be, angels inhabited the earth.

A delightful hour and rest: and we conversed upon the past and the future; upon the worlds unseen and to come; upon the supernatural, the psychological and the metaphysical, until we seemed to hear shadowy wings in all the air, and strange voices in the flowing water. Perhaps all this was due to the fact that we had breakfasted very lightly many hours ago, and had reached that condition of things which seems to mark the boundary line between the worlds seen and unseen. Therefore we returned to our too long-delayed luncheon.

The dining-room was now empty, the noisy assembly having transferred itself to an adjoining ante-room, where they still made merry. One twanged a mandoline, another sang, and every now and then a chorus of voices almost raised the roof. Then would

come intervals of chatter and laughter, which reached us in spite of closed doors.

"These people evidently do not find this world a 'vale of tears,'" laughed E. "Their very sorrows must sit lightly upon them. Perhaps they are to be envied. They know nothing better, wish for nothing better, and at heart are probably as good as those on whom the 'weight and woe of the errand of life' never slumbers or sleeps. And yet," she added, "I suppose they have no sense of the beautiful and the sublime, whilst their realisation of the Divine is very limited. No, they are to be pitied, poor things, after all."

When luncheon was over we escaped through one of the French windows which opened on to the deserted road and fields at the back of the hotel, glad to return to a paradise of peace.

"We have paid for our luncheon twice over," said E. quaintly, "and the noisy people were the heavier burden."

When the two hours were over, our coachman, punctual to the moment—a rare virtue—mounted his box and brought round the carriage. The hotel people, civil and obliging, came out to speed us on our way. If their inn was noisy, probably it was the element that kept them going and adjusted the ledger at the end of the year. We were not sorry to leave it and go our way. At the *Croce d'Oro*, a still more primitive inn, the people looked out with pale faces and hungry eyes, as though upbraiding the *Post* for taking all the custom from them.

Once more we began to ascend the fine new road to Pianazzo, beyond which the tunnels and wonderful galleries with their solid masonry and roofs sloping outwards protect the road from avalanches. Then came the boundary-line separating Italy from Switzerland, and as we passed away from that sunny and romantic, much-favoured and much-loved land, we felt a difference in the air. At the custom-house the officer was studiously polite, asked no questions, and gave no trouble. We felt constrained to offer him a cigar, which he accepted with a bow that no Englishman of his station can ever hope to attain to.

Until now we had had wild, grand, and barren mountains falling away pile beyond pile, stretching their massive heads to the heavens with their eternal snows and glaciers.

After the custom-house we soon began to descend the pass of the Splügen, one of the most ancient and dangerous of passes, and much used by the Romans. Just beyond the custom-house, we were 7,000 feet above the sea, but very soon reached the splendid series of zigzags, at the bottom of which ran a small torrent; then, passing through scenery that was a great contrast to the wild and barren Valley of the Liro, we approached the broad and beautiful Rhine, and rumbling over the bridge immediately found ourselves in the romantic and picturesque village of Splügen: not sorry that our day's

drive was over, wonderfully beautiful and crowded with interest though it had been.

At the *Bodenhaus*, in the small square, we found plenty of accommodation "for man and beast."

It was a large rambling building that took up the whole of one side of the square, whilst its stables took up another. Diligences stood about unharnessed, waiting their hour of departure.

The interior of the hotel was charmingly old and unconventional. An oak staircase led up to corridors and rooms that were all panelled and looked as if they had not been disturbed for centuries: the rooms enormous, the furniture large and old-fashioned, the ceilings beamed, and the windows quaint and leaded.

"This is delightful for what may be called our last stage," said E. in ecstasy at all she saw. "For to-morrow we reach Thusis; and that will be the end of our journey, inasmuch as we shall have no fresh scenes to visit or new impressions to receive. Surely here is another haunted house? It must have seen a few tragedies and accumulated a small army of ghosts in its centuries of existence."

Just then the landlord passed through the wide uncarpeted corridor with its polished floor of dark oak, and we put the question to him. He smiled, looked mysterious, shrugged his shoulders and shook his head.

"I am bound to say there are traditions," he answered; "and there is one room at the far end of the house that no one will enter after dark. I have never seen anything myself, but confess to hearing strange sounds. What ancient house is without them? The wind whistles through crevices and it becomes a ghostly wail; the panels crack and give, and the sounds are exaggerated to a ghostly walk. Once even I was alarmed. Night after night there were strange unearthly shrieks and sighings going through the house at midnight; people turned pale and trembled; servants fled away; even I, who laugh ghosts to scorn, was puzzled. One night I made up my mind to investigate, and I traced the ghost. The sounds came from an abandoned room at the very end of the last corridor; and as I opened the door, and threw in a strong light from my lantern, a pair of enormous eyes glared at me; then came a hissing breath, and then with silent wing an owl flew out of the dismantled casement into the night. That was the nearest approach to a ghost I have ever seen in the *Bodenhaus*."

A diligence came clattering up, and the landlord, excusing himself, went off to receive it.

It was quite a mediæval treat to wander through these panelled rooms and corridors, where such horrors as wall papers were unknown, and nothing met the eye but beautiful dark wood, polished with age, and lighted up by those old-world casements that threw so great a charm, so refined an atmosphere over the whole house.

A little later in the evening, when twilight was beginning to fall

we went out into the village, which proved even more picturesque and romantic than we had thought it.

It lies some 4,800 feet above the sea, just where the two roads meet leading to the Alpine and San Bernardino passes. Thus many diligences meet at Splügen; and this little, far away, out of the world spot, buried in the mountains, has long been the scene of quiet activity and bustle.

But the coming and going of the diligences have not influenced the village itself with its four hundred souls all told. Excepting at the arrival or departure of the coaches, it is the same sleepy, primitive, deserted place that it was a century ago. The mountains rise up behind it, leading to the passes. Down a narrow, romantic gorge



THUSIS, OVERLOOKING THE NOLLA.

rushes a torrent over its shallow rocky bed. The sound of water is ever to be heard. On the rocky slopes houses are perched with gabled roofs and overhanging eaves, and white walls and shuttered windows; and a few forges send forth their weird influence and the delightful sound of the anvil.

The village is altogether on a slope until you reach the river-side, and here facing the bridge you find the most ancient and most picturesque houses. Once upon a time the bridge was covered, and then the scene must have been perfect, but now a hideous iron girder spans the stream with all its unwelcome nineteenth century influence.

We walked down the broad valley in the gathering twilight, beside the Rhine, here! so especially beautiful and placid. The light still

lingering in the sky was reflected upon its surface, which looked like a wide band of gleaming liquid silver. Presently we crossed a picturesque wooden bridge into the meadows beyond, where a multitude of wild flowers had gone to sleep in the green grass. Hills rose on either side with their wooded slopes, their fringed undulations standing out against the evening sky, now full of a rosy afterglow. At the end of the valley a splendid snow mountain reached as it were to the heavens. Everything was quiet and full of repose. We had the world to ourselves and revelled in the charming solitude, until the flush died out and the stars appeared and night spread her mantle.

Everything was silent when we returned to the village; lights were out in all the windows; everyone had gone to roost. Only from the *Bodenhaus* came a few gleams from the latticed panes, like glimmerings from a dead-and-gone world; a past age of beauty, romance and genius, artistic feeling and conception, and conscientious work. The pity of it!

Our rest that night was not visited by strange sounds or ghostly apparitions: nothing more uncanny than the arrival or departure of a diligence with its accompanying noise and bustle and disappearance into the darkness. At such times the moving lights flashed into the room, and the leaded panes threw their shadows about walls and ceiling, and we could easily have conjured up shadowy sacques and powdered hair and blood-curdling episodes. But neither sight nor sound disturbed us. Perhaps we had not reached that point of etherealised emaciation necessary for penetrating the supernatural, like our kindly American host at Soglio.

The next morning the village was a little more lively and stirring. The torrent seemed to dash more quickly over its rocky bed; men were at work in the saw mills; in the forges the bellows were kindling great flames, and the ring of the anvil rose cheerily upon the air. Up the road we had walked last night came a woman with her cow; the cow patient, large-eyed, meek; the woman patient also, and quite pathetically ugly. We stopped and wished her good-morning, asked her if the cow was her own.

"The saints be praised," she replied, "it is. I have no other means of living, and if I lost my cow, should be destitute. My husband died twenty years ago, just six months after we were married, and I have had to do the best I can ever since. A hard struggle, but the neighbours have been very good to me, and have never let me want for a crust of bread. Now with my cow I am quite at my ease."

A whole life-drama in a few words. We wondered whether the woman had been as ugly in youth as now, and if so what manner of man had had the courage to marry her. But she had redeeming qualities; a gentle expression, a voice that was not unpleasing, and evidently an amiable temperament.

The cow, having stopped of its own accord, now moved on, as though to exercise a royal prerogative and put an end to the interview.

The mountains were all about us: the Guggernüll and the Einshorn, and beyond the Splügen Pass the sharp and piercing Kalkberg. There are lovely forest walks all round about; and some distance up the torrent lies an ancient hermitage. The people of Splügen are a mixed race, for it has changed hands many times and dates back to the early centuries.

We were sorry to say good-bye to this quaint and romantic little spot, and enter upon the last stage of our drive. The utmost romantic beauty and charm of scenery still followed us; long wooded valleys watered by the ever-constant Rhine; mountains closing around in all their towering height and majesty of form; whilst now we passed down zigzags of the utmost wooded beauty; now drove through forest paths and roads lined with trees that cast long shadows, the sunshine glinting and flashing all about us; and now passed out into calm and peaceful plains where the lovely waters of the Rhine still flowed.

At Andeer, in its sunny plain, we had come down to some 3,000 feet above the sea. It looked what it is—a deserted town or village; still full of interest, with its fairly large buildings from which all life seems to have departed. Here people once came to take the waters and baths, until in 1869 the mineral spring was destroyed by a flood. Its glory has departed; but the place was so sunny, the feeling of repose so great, that we longed to take up our station here for a time—for the hotel or bath-establishment still seemed open. But our energetic driver whipped up his horses, and passed rapidly under the curious archway into the open plain.

At Zillis we stayed awhile to visit the church and examine the curious twelfth century frescoes that adorned its ceilings: the patriarch who showed us about looking at least a century old.

"The world has seen some changes in my time," said he, "but they have not been seen by me. I have never been out of this village, though I am over ninety years old. I have heard of steamers that plough the sea, and trains that run like lightning through the land, and people that rush about the world, and wear life out when it is only half over. To me it is all as a sealed volume. I always took life calmly, and so here I am, hale and hearty, and able to work and walk, neither blind, nor deaf, nor stupid, notwithstanding my ninety-four years."

He certainly looked as though he might see his century out. His face was fine though wrinkled, his hair and beard were snow white, his eyes had still a little fire left in them.

We went our way; a somewhat tamer and quieter way until we presently reached the head of the Via Mala, and found ourselves surrounded by all the wild and savage splendour and sublimity of this matchless pass. In spite of all we had seen and gone through

we were more than ever impressed by its overpowering gloom and magnificence: its rocky precipices, frowning walls, and deep narrow gorge through which the torrent forces its way; and as we neared the end, the ruined tower of Hohen Rhätien crowning its rock, and standing boldly above the firs that relieved its savage aspect set its seal to the view.

We went slowly, slowly down the pass, took in and absorbed as far as we could all its gloom and grandeur, the majesty of its black precipitous rocks rising nearly 2,000 feet high; and still it came to an end too soon.

Then we entered upon the Valley of the Domlesch, and in a few minutes found ourselves once more in Thusis at our old hotel, the *Via Mala*. How much we had seen and done since we had last passed through its portals!

We had intended making a short sojourn here, but to our surprise the inn was full: they could only give us rooms in the lower part of the house: a region that for the sake of euphony we called Dante's Inferno, where breathing was almost suspended. After our late experiences it was impossible to put up with the risk of suffocation, and we decided to go on to Zurich by the afternoon train.

"But," said E. sadly, "I feel that all is over. Our experiences and impressions have come to an end. At Thusis we may write *Finis* to our last chapter; for we are now really entering upon our journey home. We have nothing further to anticipate; nothing new or strange; and the very charm and delight of our dream-world make its conclusion a sorrow and a sadness. Yes, everything comes to an end. It is one of the relentless facts of life for which there is no remedy, and from which there is no escaping."



THE BUHL CABINET.

BY JOHN AYS COUGH, AUTHOR OF "THE NEW CURIOSITY SHOP."

I.

IF Lord Hounslow and Lady Salford imagined that the firm of Jokes & Co. must cease to exist because its identity with Francis Street, Esq., had been detected, they were lamentably mistaken.

As he walked home from Salford House the young man admitted to himself that the attempt to keep his shop-keeping a secret had been foredoomed to failure. But his shop-keeping had not been a failure at all : and there was no present reason whatever for abandoning it.

Lord Hounslow was walking beside him ; but since leaving Salford House he had smoked in silence. He was half-expecting "a wiggling," and was half-ready to admit that he deserved it.

"Why did you come with me?" his friend presently inquired.

Lord Hounslow perceived that if there was to be any wiggling it was to open in a direction different from that which he had expected.

"How do you mean?"

"Well, you came downstairs with me and left the house with me, and you wanted to give me a cigarette in the hall : and behaved altogether in a manner singularly unbecoming a young earl who happened to be quitting a lady's house at the same moment as one of her tradesmen."

"Oh, bunkum!" observed Lord Hounslow. "That little joke's obsolete now. You left the house as one of Lady Salford's acquaintances. It's all up with your being a tradesman."

Frank explained that this was far from being the case.

"I've got my living to earn whether my customers know my real name or not," he said, "and I seem likely to earn it very comfortably as Jokes & Co."

"Do you mean that you are really going to stick to it?"

"Of course. If the business succeeds as well as I intend it shall, I shall ultimately sell it, and do something with the money. Meanwhile, I have to work it up."

Lord Hounslow did not quite know what to say. He was a young man of a warm and generous imagination, and he had his own ideas as to what his friend's future was to be. But it was, he felt, rather easy to speak of them : and to speak without betraying them was, he was conscious, beyond his powers. So he sighed and held his peace.

"To-morrow is early closing day," remarked Frank, after a medita-

tive pause, "and I'm going down into the country on business—to attend a sale in fact. Oddly enough it's in a farm-house which used to belong to my grandfather: I suppose now it belongs to the National Debt."

Lord Hounslow, of course, recognised the allusion to old Jabez Street's eccentric will.

"How you can speak of it without gnashing your teeth," he said, "is beyond my comprehension."

"Even *your* comprehension has limits, you see," observed Frank, who had not quite forgiven his friend's betrayal of his secret to Lady Salford.

"That," declared Lord Hounslow solemnly, "is a very incorrect way of speaking—for one in your lowly position—to a nobleman."

They both laughed comfortably, and Lord Hounslow suggested that he should accompany his friend on the morrow. Frank had no possible objection to urge, except that it would be a waste of time and money: and, as that trifling objection might have been urged with almost equal force against most of Lord Hounslow's occupations, it failed to be conclusive. So Frank told him that the station was Horley, and the train to catch was the 1.55 from Victoria; whereupon they said good-night and parted.

At ten minutes to two on the following day Frank arrived on the platform, and was rather surprised to find his friend already there. He did not deny himself the pleasure of expressing that astonishment.

"Well," replied Lord Hounslow, "I have had the whole morning to catch the train in. You, I daresay, have done other things. How's trade?"

"Very lively. I've sold a lot of things; and the Duchess of Fulham came again. She wants engravings of all the Fulhams back to Adam, and wants them by Wednesday at a quarter to four."

"I've got the tickets," observed Lord Hounslow, restraining his friend from an obvious tendency to the booking-office, and holding two up rather ostentatiously.

"First class!" objected Frank reproachfully, and they moved along towards the carriage.

"Take your seats, please!" called a porter.

"Here we are," said Lord Hounslow. His face was rather guilty; but he hoped, in the hurry, it might not be noticed. He held the carriage-door open and Frank jumped in.

"Good morning, Mr. Street!" said Lady Salford.

"Good morning, Mr. Jokes!" said her half-sister.

"I've got the tickets," observed Lord Hounslow, holding up four this time, and stepping in with a brazen air of simplicity.

They all four laughed, but Frank did not deem it expedient to denounce the duplicity of Lord Hounslow at that moment. An old lady of an austere deportment occupied one of the corners, with her

back to the engine, but her face against all mankind. She knitted noisily and very tightly, and her expression was one of vehement protest and disapproval. When the four young people laughed she elevated her eyebrows and pursed her lips, which were wide, but very pale and thin; and when Lord Hounslow asked her whether she would dislike having the window open, she said, "... four, five, six," and snapped up a stitch as if it had been a caraway seed, and she had been some ugly, cross old bird.

The malign influence of this old lady seemed to damp even Lord Hounslow's spirits for a while, and there was not, at first, much conversation. He sat trying not to watch her, and getting caught doing so about twice a minute, on each of which occasions he blew his nose guiltily and with evident supererogation.

"Got a cold?" demanded the old lady at last, with such startling directness that Lord Hounslow had not presence of mind to pretend that he was indeed so afflicted.

She had just reached the end of a row, and she poised the vacant needle in the air as if about to harpoon him.

"Thought you hadn't," she retorted. "Snuffly habit."

Frank and Miss Dene got rather red in the face from trying not to laugh; Lord Hounslow got very red indeed, but not from suppressed mirth. Lady Salford remained serenely pale as was her habit. She was not nearly so good-looking as her sister, but her appearance was much more interesting. The old lady watched them, with her head on one side, and a clicking of the eyelids, immensely suggestive of a cassowary getting ready to peck.

"Sisters?" she demanded suddenly, addressing the party at large.

"Only two of us," murmured Lord Hounslow, anxious to regain his perkiness, but not speaking loudly enough to suggest a *bonâ fide* desire for retort.

Lady Salford looked amused, and admitted that the other young lady was her sister.

The cassowary had finished another row, and she made another plunge at Lord Hounslow.

"Best-looking one the eldest, eh?" she demanded, leaning forward and affecting a whisper.

"They must be twins at that rate," replied the young man, with reviving spirit.

"Poof!" ejaculated the old lady, clicking her eyelids scornfully, and stabbing her needle into a stitch as if she was determined it should not evade her.

II.

At Croydon the old lady got out, and they had the carriage to themselves.

"Why did you let her in?" demanded Lord Hounslow of the two ladies.

"She never consulted us," replied Miss Dene. "I wish she had been going all the way; she was delightful."

"I do hope," said her sister, "*you* will never become delightful!"

"She never can," murmured Lord Hounslow, in what Frank called his "best manner." They all laughed, and the train moved on again.

It was a delightful afternoon, and they were all in good spirits at a few hours' emancipation from the glare and heat of London. In twenty minutes Horley was reached, and they got out. Quarter of an hour later they had reached Sheepcote, the farm where the sale was going on.

It was a delightful place, more like an old manor house than a farm, and it lay, among green lanes, surrounded by fields so well timbered as to suggest that they formed part of an ancient park or chase. The house was of old, mellow brick, lichen-rusted, and relieved by windows, chimney-stacks, and copings of worn grey stone. Behind, one caught glimpses of huge ricks; in front was a trim garden hedged with clipped box, and having in the centre a sundial of crumbing stone. The doorway was rather low, and broadly arched; over it, carved in stone, was a date that carried one restfully back to the wide times of Elizabeth; and a symbol, once not uncommon—the full-faced sun shining down upon an opening flower, out of which springs a butterfly, new-delivered from its chrysalis, and *Thus, O my Soule!* incised about it.

Old as the place seemed, there was no suggestion of melancholy or decay about it; only of a rich and placid peace, and a bland, steadfast ripeness.

The old garden filled the air with warm, sweet fragrance, and from the fields there crept other vague, pure odours, as though of the caressing hands of God laid upon the things that He had made and man had not trampled or destroyed.

Ever so far up, by the wide blue door of Heaven, sang a lark. In a field not far off a few lads and girls were haymaking, and their cheerful laughter came pleasantly enough, mellowed by the intervening space of meadow and copse. The half-sensuous complaining of doves was just audible from a depth of wood some furlongs away to the east.

All the quiet influence of the place seemed to drop down upon our four Londoners, and drew them into a sort of friendly silence and contentment.

The sale was not at all like the auctions Frank had attended in London: it was, indeed, much pleasanter. Most of the things had been turned out on to a smooth lawn, or bowling-green, that ran along the west side of the house, and there, grouped, but not crowded, under the cool shadows of scented cedars, was gathered the thin concourse of those who had come to the sale. Except our friends they were all rustics, and, to say truth, few were buyers. The

Sunday smartness of the ladies marked it as a holiday jaunt rather than a business expedition.

The auctioneer was himself local, and was full of the local suggestion of prosperous leisure. He had none of the snappish hurry of your London salesman; his jests were at no particular person's expense and were of established reputation. As soon as he began one it was recognised, and his audience marshalled their grins in readiness for the well-known point. He did not seem to whip up the bidding with scorn or sarcasm, but just to jog it forward with a good-natured shove or so.

The auction seemed half picnic and half country fair.

All the best things were still unsold when our friends arrived. The sale had begun at "Twelve o'clock precisely," which meant, literally, about ten minutes to one; and there had been farm stock, grass, hay, and implements to dispose of out of doors, and dairy and kitchen matters within.

Frank, who had heard by a lucky accident of the sale, had come after some fine old Chippendale furniture, and he found that there was some good china also. Some of the china Lady Salford bought; and some her sister also got.

"I really must buy something!" declared Lord Hounslow. "I've no idea of letting you have all the fun. I wonder if that churn is sold?"

The auctioneer overheard and regretfully informed him that it was, suggesting that there was a larger one that had been "overlooked," which would be put up when they dealt with the cheese-room.

Lord Hounslow made a pencil note on the back of a letter, with his tongue a trifle protruded to the left, which he had perceived was the local custom.

"I'm quite determined to get that Buhl cabinet," observed Lady Salford. "You're only going in for the Chips, aren't you, Mr. Street?"

Mr. Street assured her that he did not propose to bid against her for the *escritoire* in question; in fact, he considered it rather ugly, of a period that he was accustomed to despise as "exuberant."

"Jove!" exclaimed Hounslow. "Who'd have ever thought of cabinets getting exuberant. My mother used to call me 'exuberant,' when my other parent wanted to hide me for shutting five live rats in his hat-box."

The sale jogged leisurely on. The auctioneer sometimes stopped to take a drink of ale out of a brown jug, and sometimes to try and overhear the pleasantries of Lord Hounslow, which he appreciated immensely. No one was in the least hurry. Meanwhile the pleasant afternoon lay smiling in the happy fields, the fresh, light breeze came breathing coolly from the slumbrous woods, and still the flowers sweetened all the air, and in the great elms myriads of unseen insects droned their drowsy hum. The pigeons came and went

unheeding of the little crowd, and strutted foppishly about the old paved yard and on the red-tiled roof. Albeit, the old farm was changing hands, and the old farmer had fallen quietly into willing sleep, and been laid, against the Great Awakening, to his long rest beside the ferny wall of the sunny churchyard. They were cheery philosophers, unmoved by this or that, and taking all things, life and the sleep after life, with equal mind.

When the sun went down behind the trees, and the four Londoners went back to the great weary town, they carried with them an abiding memory of the calm and constant peace of that long pleasant afternoon.

"Thus, O my soule," thought Frank, remembering the old symbol carven in the stone of the arched doorway.

But his reverie was broken by the voice of Lady Salford.

"Well, I have got my Buhl cabinet—and it was disgracefully cheap. Are you pleased with your Chips?"

"But I haven't got my churn," complained Lord Hounslow.

III.

At Croydon Lord Hounslow could not be restrained from thrusting his curly head out of the window, to see if the Cassowary was there.

"Of course she's not there," declared Miss Dene. "How absurd you are!"

"I wish I was," groaned the young man, pulling his head back very hurriedly. "There she is!"

But he was not quick enough to avoid being seen. The sharp restless eyes had caught sight of him, and he had instantly been recognised.

"Open the door, I'm coming in," snapped the Cassowary.

Lord Hounslow obeyed without betraying any enthusiasm, and the old lady clambered in. He certainly did not want her, but he helped her very politely.

"Cold better?" she demanded, as soon as she had taken her seat and got out the knitting.

"No; worse," he replied gloomily.

"More snuffly, eh? Been sitting on damp grass, perhaps? Young. Silly."

She wagged her head sharply and counted "two, three, four!" as if she was disposing of him and the subject. But presently she looked up suddenly and clicked out another question.

"Father's gout better?"

Lord Hounslow looked a good deal surprised by this sudden show of interest in his parent's health.

"Bless us! Might have said something improper!" snapped the old lady. "Gout's quite modest. How's your father's?"

Lord Hounslow admitted that it occasionally troubled him.

"Always did. Tell him I asked. Know my name?"

The young man confessed that he had not that pleasure.

"Meaning, 'don't know, and don't care'! Well, it's Green! Signature, *J. M. Green*. But I'm not; not a bit of it."

Lord Hounslow bowed with a resigned air of misery. He was long since convinced that their travelling companion was a lunatic. She eyed him sharply.

"Think I'm crazy? Not a bit of it. Ask your mother—ask Dulcibella!"

Now it was quite true that the Marchioness of Mortlake did indeed rejoice in the ridiculous Christian name of Dulcibella.

At this point the old lady laughed, and they were all not a little grateful for so legitimate an excuse for a laugh on their own account.

"That's better!" snapped the old lady. "Swallowed our pokers now. Get on better."

"You seem to know my name, anyway," observed Lord Hounslow in a leading manner.

"So it seems," clicked the Cassowary, refusing his lead exasperatingly.

"Do you know all our names?" inquired Miss Dene unwarily.

"No! Didn't even know you had one," retorted the old lady.

"What's yours?" she demanded, harpooning the firm of Jokes & Co.

"I trade as Jokes & Co.," it replied, handing her a business card with immense urbanity.

"Rubbish! You're a gentleman," she snapped. "Twin's husband? No? Not at present? Question premature?" And the Cassowary cackled again. Her laughter was extraordinarily brief and of an incredibly hard and bony tone, like castanets.

"Well! And how did you like Horley? Poof! Think one's deaf? Think one don't know all your names and all about you. Horley, yes. Porter said so first; then the lilac twin" (it was true that Miss Dene's hat was adorned with that flower); "then the boy."

She nodded quickly at Lord Hounslow, and added that she should know him anywhere for a son of Dulcibella's.

". . . Only better looking. Big mouth, and Dulcibella could not hide it. Moustache very useful."

No one made much attempt to reply to this extraordinary old lady's remarks. It called for an acrobatic agility of speech. But she did not seem to desire any replies.

"Pretty place Horley. Had a sister once. Went and lived there. Heaven knows why! Sister pretty; self plain. Self single; sister silly. Sister married. Bad luck; scamp husband. Sister dead; self alive. Alive and ugly better than dead and pretty. Poof!"

Ever as she clicked her restless eyes seemed to peck at theirs,

keen, observant, shrewd, and watchful ; and the needles clicked, and the knitting grew longer. Her one beauty was her white delicate hands, and the knitting showed them off.

"Keep a shop? Honour bright?" she demanded, once again harpooning Frank. "Duke, I suppose? Most dukes keep 'em now. Milk or coals?"

Frank observed that it would be seen from the card he had handed the lady that his line of business was neither fuel nor dairy produce, but curios.

"H'm? Buy me? Sell again? Genuine antique—barocco, eh? Prob'ly unique—'hope so,' eh? Rude lad; certainly duke. Dukes all rude nowadays. Too good-looking, though."

It is impossible to suggest in print the rapidity with which all this was said, and yet with such a clear staccato that not a word was ever lost, even in the train.

At Victoria the old lady bade them a touching farewell, and assured Jokes & Co. she would come and look at his curios; to Dulcibella she sent her love.

"Whose love?" Hounslow managed to ask with abrupt presence of mind.

"Selina's!" clicked the Cassowary. "She'll know what Selina when you've mocked me. Good-bye, twins; there's my carriage..."

A very smart brougham was awaiting her, and quite close to it was Lady Salford's.

IV.

THE following afternoon Lord Hounslow dropped in on Jokes & Co. with a note from Lady Salford to request that he would dine with her that night, to inspect the Buhl cabinet, which had arrived and was even now being unpacked.

"And who," inquired Frank, "is the Cassowary? Did Lady Mortlake recognise your description?"

"Rather. She's an old maid rejoicing in the name of Selina Twigg—highly appropriate, eh? Just what she does, eh?"

And the young man clicked imitatively.

"She had a sister," he continued, "who died years ago, and was very pretty; but she was rummy too; she took it into her head to disappear, and only emerged to announce her demise in guarded terms. Selina won't believe she is dead. Prefers to think she disgraced herself and retired to America or somewhere. . . . Of course you'll come to-night?"

Frank, "after some slight affectation of uncertainty," as his friend put it, said he would. And eight o'clock found him in Lady Salford's drawing-room.

"Who do you think called on me to-day?" inquired his hostess when they had taken their places at table.

"The Cassowary," he replied, without an instant's hesitation.

"Yes. I was in, and she was quite delightful. She assured me that she preferred my appearance to Margaret's, though of course Margaret was better-looking. And she successfully pumped out of me all about you and your shop. She is over head and ears in love with you."

"I thought it was Hounslow," laughed Frank.

"On the contrary she considers him *futile*. I think *futile* is excellent, don't you?"

Everyone laughed, though Lord Hounslow's merriment was said by Miss Dene to be obviously forced.

"And," concluded Lady Salford, "I ended by telling her you were coming here to-night to have a look at my Buhl cabinet, and she bare-facedly asked to be allowed to come too—to meet you, I'm sure, not the cabinet."

"Fancy being invited to meet a cabinet!"

"One is often asked to meet a bit of one," declared the jocular Lord Hounslow.

After dinner, they all four left the dining-room together, and went at once to Lady Salford's library where the Buhl cabinet had been placed. Five minutes later Miss Twigg was announced.

Frank pointed out the excellences of the cabinet with great magnanimity, as he declared, seeing the article had not been purchased at his establishment, and that he did not personally admire Buhl.

"For my part," said Miss Dene, "I shall consider you have been cheated, Gladys, if it does not prove to contain a secret drawer."

"Enclosing a treasure," interpolated Hounslow.

"Of course," agreed Miss Dene. "Who ever heard of a secret drawer without a treasure? You insist needlessly on details, Lord Hounslow."

"If," observed Frank, "this cabinet contains a secret drawer at all, *this* is where it certainly will be." And he gently pressed a little inlaid pillar on one side of an arched pigeon-hole. The "secret" draw was there, and proved to be quite empty.

"Is there one on the other side too?"

"Not usually," replied Frank; "but you can try."

Miss Dene did try, and it proved that there was a second drawer. In it was a single piece of faded paper of official and uninteresting appearance.

"How stupid!" she complained; "the roll of banknotes has evidently been removed by some unscrupulous person. . . ."

"Before you could get at it," suggested Hounslow.

"And only this dull piece of paper left," continued Miss Dene, ignoring his interruption with dignity.

"It looks like a water-rate," remarked Lady Salford.

"Let us read it, at any rate," urged Frank.

The Cassowary nodded sharply, as if to point out that there was one sensible person besides herself in company.

The paper that looked like a "water-rate" was handed to Frank, and he flushed oddly as soon as he had glanced at it.

For a moment he said nothing, but kept his eyes fixed on the faded paper, then he looked up and said quietly :

"I am sure, Lady Salford, no one sympathises more sincerely than I do with you in your natural disappointment at not finding hidden treasure. But to tell the truth, what you *have* found is of much greater importance to me."

"What is it?" they all asked. "Not another will of your grandfather's?"

"No; but something quite as surprising, and nearly as useful. This is the certified copy of the *marriage certificate* of my grandfather to"—and here Frank glanced at the Cassowary—"to Jessica Twigg on the 3rd of November, 1860."

He handed the paper to the old lady.

"H'm—yes. Jessica Twigg, daughter of Ephraim and Maria; pretty sister, right enough. Died next spring. Married Marston Street, son of Hiram; never thought he had a father. H'm."

"But why," inquired Hounslow, "is this as good as a will? Explain position."

Everyone laughed; quite involuntarily he was again clicking like the Cassowary.

"This marriage," explained Frank, "took place in November, 1860; the disinheriting will is dated some time before that, and a subsequent marriage invalidates a will. So that my grandfather died, in reality, intestate, and his only child—my father—is still his heir at law."

"Oh, my aunt!" exclaimed the fervidly vernacular Lord Hounslow.



A FEW DISTINGUISHED GHOSTS.

THE habitat of the true ghost is capricious and unaccountable, as are the manners of its modern representative.

By the term "true ghost" is meant the old-fashioned and respectably-horrible apparition in which our forefathers believed, and the present paper deals with this type alone.

It may not be generally known that more than one Queen of England, according to popular tradition,

"Revisited the glimpses of the moon."

Joan of Navarre, the second wife of King Henry IV., who lies buried with him in Canterbury Cathedral, was the first to set this uncanny example. A curious shadow rests over the memory of this lady. Perhaps it is entirely due to the fact that she was born daughter to the most wicked king in Europe. All the same, the shadow is there.

She married a Duke of Bretagne, and was the mother of several children when Henry, as a widowed exile, sought refuge at her husband's court.

Later, when he was seated on the throne of England and the Duke of Bretagne was dead, he offered his royal hand to the fair widow, and she accepted it with alacrity that looked like joy. Her stepson, Henry V., imprisoned her on a charge of witchcraft, and seized her revenues for his newly-married consort; but on his death-bed he restored her property and set her free.

A charge of this nature, however, was readily believed by the populace, and long years after she had died in an old palace which once stood at Havering-Atte-Bower, it was said to be haunted by "Jane, the Witch Queen."

No less than three of the unfortunate wives of Henry VIII. followed in her footsteps, according to weird tradition. Anne Boleyn "walked" the Tower, and took dismal turns round the scaffold the night before any fresh execution took place. Her subtle rival, Jane Seymour, had a fancy for Hampton Court, which was shared by the frail and unfortunate Katherine Howard.

The first of these two appeared on the anniversary of the birth-night of her son, King Edward VI., and ascended the steps leading to the "Silver Stick Gallery." She was attired in flowing white garments, and held a lighted taper in her hand; and if she was as beautiful as Lord Herbert seemed to think her, she must have made a lovely apparition. There is something calm and measured, also, in the manner of her reappearance that harmonises with the colourless life she led as queen-consort.

Far different is the legendary account of Katherine's return. She bursts upon the scene in her young, impatient agony, rampart with terror and despair.

It may be remembered that, though married to her for more than a year, Henry VIII. had by no means grown tired of his fifth wife. The bright, graceful, and amiable girl had wound herself each day more closely about that part of Bluebeard which passed for a heart, and at first he refused to believe the tale of her early depravity. But, ever suspicious, he ordered her to remain in her own apartment while the evidence was sifted.

It was the last night they spent under the same roof, and during the terrible hours which passed before he quitted the palace, she made two frantic attempts to force herself into his presence. Each time she was followed, overtaken, and dragged back to her room, though on one occasion her screams filled the air. And local tradition long told the story of a "shrieking lady clothed in white, with disordered hair," who haunted a particular part of Hampton Court Palace.

The great name of Queen Elizabeth is mixed up with a particularly wild, dramatic ghost tale.

It suited her to keep the captive Queen of Scots for many years in the personal custody of the Earl of Shrewsbury, on whose loyalty she relied, though at times she aggravated him by pretended doubts.

This nobleman's second wife, the celebrated Bess of Hardwick, who had outlived three previous husbands, had of course her full share in the important trust, and at first she made much of the unfortunate prisoner. Presently it dawned on her mind that she had the most fascinating and dangerous woman in Europe domesticated under the same roof with her husband, and she became furiously jealous. In her passion she appealed to Elizabeth, who, highly delighted, fanned the family conflagration till the goaded Shrewsbury went nearly mad between the rival queens and his own envenomed countess.

The fantastic tradition ran that the three ladies who so tormented him met together in the picture gallery at Hardwick Hall at the solemn hour of midnight; and the thought of such phantoms meeting is enough to make one's hair rise on end.

There was Mary, who thirsted for the life of Elizabeth, and vainly conspired her murder; and there was Elizabeth, who thirsted for the life of Mary, and took it in the teeth of Europe; and there was the hard and selfish Bess, who set one against the other, and probably betrayed both. What could three such spectres say to each other, shade to shade, in the spirit-world where plain truth prevails?

Another weird story, which is authentic, must be related of Queen Elizabeth, whose last hours were spent at Richmond, in a palace long since down.

As she lay there dying she had fallen asleep, and Lady Guilford, who had been watching her, strolled out into the corridor to snatch a little air and change from the tension of the death-scene. To her

horror she met the Queen walking along the corridor two or three rooms away, and hastened back to her duties, only to find Elizabeth still wrapped in a "lethargic slumber."

The Kings of England, as far as the writer's knowledge extends, would seem to lie quieter in their graves than the royal ladies. Yet some of them had great provocation to return, and none more so than Edward II., to make the precincts of Berkeley Castle a terror to its inmates. And yet, to his honour, he refrained, according to the housekeeper's testimony. She was asked if the old historic building was haunted, and cautiously replied that she had seen nothing.

When further questioned if the reported ghost was said to be that of the murdered monarch, "No," was her answer; "King Edward leaves us in peace. It is Lord Lisle who troubles us."

On the surface this seems gratuitously unkind on the part of Lord Lisle, who was a relative; more particularly as he walks with his head under his arm, which is an ungentlemanly thing for any ghost to do. But examine the case and his motive appears.

When the Houses of York and Lancaster were fighting for the crown of England, he was disputing with his cousin, the Lord Berkeley of that date, about some family property which both of them claimed, and in the end they got up a Chevy Chase on their own account. Meeting on Nibley Green, each backed by his own friends, partisans, and followers, a free fight took place, which was fatal to one of the cousins. Lord Berkeley, by a dexterous stroke of his sword, cut off at a blow the head of his rival, and settled for ever their differences in this world. But Lord Lisle—less forgiving than Edward II.—does not cease to resent the loss of his head, and continues his quarrel from the grave.

This curious story is commemorated in the grand baronial hall at Berkeley Castle by a silver model of the savage duel between the cousins. Indeed, pages and pages might be written, did space permit, on that ancient pile, with its facts, fables, and thrilling associations.

The legend of Dilston Tower is far more modern and exceedingly touching.

The Earl of Derwentwater, a gallant gentleman beloved in all the country round, had started to join the Pretender; and, hesitating, turned back to his home. His charming, high-spirited wife was watching him from a window of Dilston, and, as he drew near, with the stinging scorn of a proud, beloved woman, she asked him for his sword and flung him down her fan. He turned round once more—to join the fated cause, and die on the scaffold, while she broke her heart.

So they say her restless spirit for ever looks out from Dilston Tower, and again asks him for his weapon.

E. F. COBBY.

THE PORTENT.

"O WHITHER dost thou roam, dear heart?
 Why is thy cheek so white?
 Thine eyes are wild as thou hadst seen
 Some strange and ghostly sight—
 Yet the summer day is at its dawn,
 And phantoms haunt the night!"

"O hold me in thine arms, dear love,
 Whatever ill betide,
 Yet all in vain that tender clasp
 To keep me at thy side;
 Full fast another suitor comes
 Who will not be denied!"

"I rose when stars were growing pale
 And thro' the meadows strayed—
 But I have seen a fearsome thing
 Which makes me sore afraid;
 For there I met my other self
 A-walking in the glade!"

"Its hair was like to threads of gold,
 I saw the blue eyes shine,
 Its dress was as the dress I wear,
 Exceeding soft and fine;
 And when I ran its noiseless feet
 Kept even pace with mine!"

"I turn'd and strove to cross its path,
 It turned and barred the way;
 'My Bridal is at noon,' I cried,
 'I come to gather May.'
 '*I come a-gathering flowers,*' it said,
 '*Afore my burying day!*'

"O fair is all this radiant world,
 Yet I must say good-bye,
 And warm is life, and cold and dark
 The grave where I shall lie;
 And dear is love—but not for me
 Whom God appoints to die!"
 He drew her closer to his breast,
 Her very lips were chill,
 And through her glad young limbs there passed
 A swift, mysterious thrill—
 Awhile the throbbing, frightened heart
 Just fluttered—then was still.

* * *
 High up the heavens the bridal sun
 His golden road doth climb,
 But slow and sadly sound the bells
 They ring no wedding-chime:
 Toll, O ye bells, earth's sweetest maid
 Lies dead before her time!

CHRISTIAN BURKE.

TWO CHRISTMAS EVES.

BY CATHERINE ADAMS.

MAJOR CORNELIUS WEDDERBURN had long been a collector of heterogeneous curiosities, and since his retirement from the Army he had devoted nearly the whole of his time and all his spare cash to his hobby.

At the rear of his house in South Kensington he had had a large room erected which went by the pretentious title of "The Museum." Friends from far and near had inspected the contents, and had waxed loud in their eulogies of the Major's treasures; and Lord Grayling, the owner of the celebrated Grayling Collection, had openly congratulated the delighted owner on his charming store of curiosities.

It goes without saying that the Major was not married; and although Mrs. Benson, his housekeeper, spoke slightly of her master's rubbish at times, she forbore to make much demur, for, as she told her great friend, Mrs. Pelham: "The museum kept master amused and occupied, and prevented his hankering after a Mrs. Cornelius."

It wanted but a week to Christmas, and the Major had been down town doing a little desultory shopping for the benefit of sundry nephews and nieces who expected to be remembered at this time of the year. As he took his way through a by-street to escape the congested traffic in the larger thoroughfares, he passed a dingy second-hand dealer's shop. He had often picked up a curio there, but he went by carelessly enough now.

The proprietor was standing at the door.

"Good afternoon, sir! Won't you step in and look round?"

"No-o," the Major thought not, as he gave a comprehensive look at his parcels.

"Got some fresh things in to-day, sir! Should like you to have the first offer of 'em," said the wily dealer; and the fly, never very invulnerable, went in.

"Suit of chain armour, certified to have been worn by Richard Cœur de Lion." But Major Wedderburn knew better, and declined to give more than a cursory glance at the mail suit, and shook his head at all the other objects which Mr. Levy insisted on showing him.

"Got infinitely better specimens at home," he said.

"What about this, then?" "This" was a skull which Levy held aloft triumphantly.

"Pooh," retorted the Major, "got half-a-dozen of 'em at home!"

"Very likely, but not with a hole in them. Look!"

A small round hole was plainly visible in the back of the skull.

"Umph! Poor chap! Been shot!"

"Chap!" said Levy scornfully. "It's a woman—leastways, the skull of one. Dr. Hamerton saw it this morning. He said it is the skull of a woman; and there must be a pretty story tacked on to it, if one did but know."

The Major looked at the skull more attentively.

"It's very old. The gun that made that wound must have been of a pretty ancient pattern, I'm thinking."

"Blunderbuss, the doctor said," replied Levy.

"Fudge! It was a carbine," said the Major, between whom and Dr. Hamerton there was a long-standing feud resulting from a difference of opinion as to the age of Wedderburn's mummy.

"How much?" at length said the Major; and after a little haggling the skull became his property.

"By-the-by, where did you get it from?"—And after some show of reluctance, Levy admitted that he had purchased it from a dealer in the country.

"If you are interested in the matter, and think, like Dr. Hamerton, that there's a story to it, Morris might be able to tell you where it originally came from."

"Well, I may go and see him. Where do you say he lives?"

"At Brampton, about forty miles from town, on the Great Southern."

"Brampton, eh! Why, that's close to Bastoch Castle, where the Royalists held out so long against Cromwell's men?"

But history was not Mr. Levy's strong point, and the Major went off, resolved to look the matter up. Two days later he went down to Brampton and interviewed the dealer there. But the information forthcoming was very unsatisfactory. Mr. Morris had bought the skull of a labouring man named Brown, who, he thought, lived at Bastoch village, some three miles away.

Bastoch! Well, the Major decided to go and hunt up the man, if possible; and, at any rate, he could have a look at the famous ruins. So he procured a guide-book of the ruins, and a history of the siege, and as he was driven along he refreshed his memory with the details of the struggle.

He had some difficulty in finding Mr. Brown, or rather in ascertaining *which* Mr. Brown was the man he wanted, for there were many Browns in Bastoch. At last he ran the right one to earth.

"Yes, sir, I'm the man as took a skull in to Mr. Morris, but I hope there's no wrong done. All the ground round here belongs to Lord Dartmouth. The ruins is his property too. By rights I should have taken the skull to the agent, but we wanted a bit of money, and the missus thought I'd get more for it in the town."

"Ah, and where did you find it?"

"That's the strange part of it. There's been a-many found outside the walls, but none, as I have heard on, within the Castle. But you

come with me, sir, and I'll show you. There," the man said, when he had escorted the Major within the large space enclosed by the walls, "you can see where they've been excavatin'. That's the beginning of an underground way which is thought to run in a straight line from here to Brampton, but the tunnel fell in, and they had to give up opening it again." They went on a little farther. "There, you see them steps, they leads down to the dining-hall, and over yonder you can see where the kitchens was and the ovens quite plain. Here"—the man lowered his voice—"these are the Castle dungeons. Mind, the ground is treacherous in places, and some has had nasty falls. My little boy was playing hereabouts, and he let his ball fall down into this place. I come and climbed down with a short ladder, and while I was looking for it my foot give way and the ground seemed to be crumbling away. As I shuffled some of the mould about, something white showed up amongst the rubbish, and I picked up the skull."

"Good heavens, what a place!" said the Major, vastly interested. "There are no steps. How did the prisoners get down?"

"I've heard say they had ladders which could be pulled up, so as to keep 'em in safe."

Major Wedderburn spent some little time in examining the ruins of the Castle. He even climbed down into the dungeon and was shown the exact spot where the skull had been found. He soiled his hands and shirt-cuffs considerably as he groped about among the mould and rubbish.

"There ought to have been some bones," he remarked.

The man looked sheepish.

"Well, sir, there was, only it seemed a bit queer to be selling those, so I just buried them again."

"Go and get me a spade. Go!" repeated the Major authoritatively, as the man hesitated. "I will make it worth your while——"

And then behold the deplorable spectacle of a gentleman—a late officer of her Majesty's forces—digging in haste and in some trepidation, be it owned, on the property of Lord Dartmouth.

"The complete set!" he chuckled as, an hour later, he was driven back to Brampton, with the smuggled bones stowed safely away in a hand-bag lent by the wondering Brown.

"I'll have the skeleton set up at once. And Briggs shall do it for me. And, by George, I believe I've got the identical bullet that did the ghastly deed. An historical skeleton, and the bullet that despatched it!" Not for a long time had the Major been so pleased with himself.

On Christmas Eve, as was his custom every year, Major Wedderburn had a little party of old friends to bear him company. An additional spice of attraction to the proceedings was to be the appearance of his newly-acquired skeleton.

"I hope Briggs won't be late; he promised to be here between

eight and nine," said Cornelius, as he and his friends smoked their after-dinner cigars.

"How did you pick the skeleton up?" asked one.

"If you'll all pledge your honour not to split on me, I'll tell you," said the Major. Then he told them how he had acquired his latest treasure.

"Umph! Partly by *bonâ fide* purchase and partly by what?" said someone.

"Body—I mean *bone*-snatching," laughed another. "I'm not so sure, Wedderburn, that you have not been guilty of a criminal action."

"Fudge!" declared the delinquent. "Ah, there's a ring! Briggs, I hope."

"Mr. Briggs is downstairs, sir," said the housekeeper a minute later, "and I was to say as how he had brought a *lady*."

Mrs. Benson's face looked things unutterable.

"Good for Briggs!" roared the Major.

When the case was unpacked and the owner expressed himself as well pleased with the way in which the work had been accomplished, he took something from his waistcoat pocket.

"This, gentlemen, is the identical bullet that robbed the poor denizen of that frame of her life."

"Oh, come, Wedderburn, that is a bit thick!"

"Fact!" reiterated the other, telling how he had groped among the rubbish in the corner of the dungeon at Bastoch Castle.

"Curious!" remarked an old officer who had been through the Crimean War. "What fancies you collectors have! I don't care for skeletons. They are too deuced uncanny to my thinking."

"I think Mrs. Benson ought to have a peep. She will be wondering what Briggs meant," said the Major.

So the housekeeper was called in.

"My latest treasure," said Cornelius grandiloquently. "It's a splendid specimen, and Briggs has done wonders."

"Really, sir, I don't like the look of it. It is so ghastly. I suppose it is for the Museum?"

"Yes, Mrs. Benson, only you must not say *it*; it is *she*. It is the skeleton of a lady."

"Oh, my goodness! Then I think as she ought to be covered up at once;" and the housekeeper fled precipitately.

A burst of laughter followed her. Then, when the noise had subsided, the Major said:

"A toast, if you please. Who knows? Possibly my skeleton may have been a great beauty and a reigning toast. Let us drink to her memory. The Fair Unknown!"

There was a general scrambling to their feet, a clink of glasses, and the Major's strange toast was duly honoured.

Another half-hour slipped by, and then the guests moved to go.

Left alone, Major Wedderburn took another cigar and mixed another glass of grog. The fire was still good, and he sat a long time in his easy-chair with his feet on the fender. He reviewed the events of the past few days, and wondered what the possible history of the skeleton might have been.

"Poor thing, poor thing!" he murmured. "Evidently a young woman; so Hamerton thought. I wonder what her story was?"

He became lost in reverie.

He awoke with a start, to find—what?

The fire nearly out and only sending a fitful gleam round the room; the lamp was gone out, and the clock of a neighbouring church was striking the hour of midnight. The glow from the dying embers in the grate shone with a peculiar radiance on the form of the skeleton opposite him, and——

Good heavens! Was he going mad, or was he only dreaming? Was it fancy?

What was this growing delusion that could see the flesh and tissue forming on the skeleton, that could distinguish the glow of life gradually irradiating the whole until the figure was transformed? Into what?

A young girl dressed in a quaint, old-world fashion, with her hair tumbled in strange confusion upon her shoulders, was before him. There was the rustle of silk, the frou-frou of lace, and she stood close before him. A whole world of entreaty lay in her eyes.

"Come!" she said, beckoning him to follow. Then, as he did not move, "Come!" she repeated more imperatively. "You must follow where I lead." Then she touched him.

He rose, impelled by some mighty insistence which was irresistible.

There was a rush—a mad rush as of a body beating rapidly against the colder outer air—and then——

* * * * *

It is in the year of grace 1644.

Bastoch Castle, which for some three years past has proved such a hard nut for the Parliamentary forces to crack, still defies the army besieging it. In vain has Colonel Gage, the officer in command of the besieging army, stormed the Castle and attempted to surprise its defenders; the place is too well defended, the inmates too alert to yield to either force or surprise. Unless a much larger force is sent to precipitate matters, affairs are at a standstill. Colonel Gage's only hope is to starve out the garrison. A strict watch has been kept of late to prevent supplies reaching the Castle, and from the reports brought into the camp a few days ago, the supplies within are falling very short.

The Earl of Faringdon, the lord of Bastoch and of the land for many miles around, holds the stronghold in the name of his unfortunate King. At present the Earl is ill and incapacitated from taking part in the defence of the Castle; but his Countess is a brave,

capable woman, and during her lord's illness it is she who directs and orders in his stead.

It is Christmas Eve, and the ground without is covered with snow. It lies so thick that one can only see just the tops of the little huts which have been built for the comfort of the besieging army during the winter months.

At the present moment all is quiet. The great culverins which have been erected on platforms commanding the outer Castle walls have been silent for some days.

"Mayhap they will let us rest in peace this Christmastide," says Lady Faringdon, as she stands behind the parapet of one of the watch-towers.

"I' faith," says her companion, Captain Brocas, "I would fain have the excitement of fighting. It assuages in some degree the pangs of hunger."

The Countess makes a gesture of despair.

"In truth," continues Brocas, "it will be a sorry Christmas for us all."

"You are a brave man, Captain, and if it is hard for you, what is it for us poor women?"

"My lady, I crave your pardon; the rebuke is merited. When I remember what you endure, the sufferings of myself are as naught."

"What was that?" cries my lady suddenly. "There—yonder! Someone is moving along in the shadow of the wall."

"I can see naught," says Brocas, "but I will haste to the spot." And he leaves Lady Faringdon alone. But the air is biting cold; the winter evening is coming on fast, and my lady is glad to go within the Castle.

Some minutes later Captain Brocas seeks to speak with her. He looks perturbed; his long cavalier curls hang limp and straight.

"What hath scared thee so?" demands the lady.

"My lady—my lady!"

"Well, well, hast seen a ghost?"

"Nay, nay. But there is treachery abroad. The figure you saw from the watch-tower— Ah, madam, there is a traitor amongst us!"

The lady's face grew pale and her brow stern.

"Speak on. Tell your story," she said almost fiercely.

"At your bidding, my lady, I started in pursuit. I could see naught, but there were traces of footprints in the snow. These I followed until they brought me past the granary and into the orchard. At the pigeon-house overlooking the moat the tracks ceased, and while I was wondering what next to do, the door suddenly opened, and I stood face to face with Mistress Dorothy."

"Dorothy? Oh, Heaven, what is this?"

"Treachery, my lady. A plot—a vile plot to surprise us."

"Dorothy! My own niece! Oh, impossible!"

"It is truth, madam. As she fled from me towards the Castle she dropped a paper. This"—drawing a paper from his doublet—"proves beyond doubt that she is in communication with one of the enemy's officers."

"The paper," says my lady. "Give it to me."

It is a rough, unfinished plan of the Castle, and on it, in an unknown hand, are the words, "Give the positions of the subterranean passage and of the drawbridge."

"Where is she?" whispers my lady.

"I caught her just as she was flying across the courtyard, and I have locked her within the guard-room."

"Good," says Lady Faringdon. "Come with me."

The heavy door is unbolted and unbarred, and the two enter the guard-room.

A small lamp hanging by a chain from the roof throws a dim light on a beautiful girl, who, at their entrance, rises from the settee.

Mistress Dorothy is very pale, and there is a look of fear in her eyes, but she looks bravely, defiantly almost, at the two people who enter.

"My own brother's child a traitor!" says Lady Faringdon in a choked voice. Her anger will scarce let her speak.

"Nay, I am no traitor," says the girl calmly. "You have known all along that my heart has not been in this useless, bloody work. What is the use of sacrificing lives day after day, month after month, year in and year out, in a lost cause? And now what is before us? Starvation! Oh, it is good to endure, to suffer! But I cannot; I am too young. And the women and the children. To see them grow daily more pinched and wan, to see the poor wounded men dying for lack of comforts, to see you yourself, Aunt Honoria, denying yourself the necessities of life, to feel myself the horrible gnawing pangs of hunger—— Oh, I cannot endure it! I cannot bear to think of it, and when Roger——"

The passionate flow of words comes to a sudden break.

"Ah," says her aunt, "now we come to the pith of the matter! And pray who is Roger?"

The girl's face flushes rosy red, and her eyes drop shamefacedly.

"You'll please leave us alone, Captain Brocas," says my lady. And the Captain disappears.

"And now tell me who is Roger?"

"Roger is the son of Sir Hugh Norton of Abbotsford. They are both honourable gentlemen——"

"Yes, yes," interrupts her aunt; "but they are traitors now!"

"We plighted our troth just before the troubles began; then after, when we found our friends were taking different sides, we forbore to say aught, but determined to wait until the cloud—which had for the time turned friends into enemies—should be blown over."

"What was *then*, cannot be *now*! When brother sides against

brother in this bitter struggle, shall two young fools like you and Roger be permitted to indulge in such folly?"

"Why not?" cries Mistress Dorothy. "Is love to be turned aside because, forsooth, the King and his Parliament cannot agree?"

"Enough!" cries my lady angrily. "You plead guilty to holding clandestine meetings with one of the enemy. But what say you to this?" She holds up the paper given her by Brocas.

"Did I? Oh no, I cannot!" stammers Dorothy with affrighted looks, and feeling in the folds of her dress.

"That suffices," says my lady stonily. "So you, Dorothy Fairbrother, are in league with the enemy to compass our ruin?"

"Nay, 'tis not so!" cries the girl. "It cannot be treachery to compass what is for our good, for the good of all who are within these walls. And Roger planned it as much for my sake, and those who are dear to me, as for his own glory."

"Glory!" cries her aunt contemptuously.

There is a slight pause, while the girl quivers under her aunt's stern looks.

"Do you know the fate of traitors?" says Lady Faringdon.

"Yes," replies the girl in a whisper; "it is *death!*"

"And why should you escape the fate which you have merited? No, by Heaven, you shall not! We will be just in all things. But first, to make you more secure."

The guard is summoned, and Mistress Dorothy is escorted to one of the dungeons in the centre of the castle. The trap-door, which consists of a heavy slab of stone let into the roof of the dungeon, is lifted from its place, and a ladder is let down into the gloomy depths.

As the unhappy girl realises that she is indeed a prisoner, and sees the awful blackness of the dungeon, she screams aloud for mercy.

But Lady Faringdon, wrought up to a pitch of frenzy, pushes her away from her, and orders her to be lifted down the ladder.

A stalwart man-at-arms bears the moaning girl down into the dungeon; then, as he reappears alone, the ladder is withdrawn.

My lady takes a lantern from one of the men, and looks down into the gloom. The light casts a pale reflection on the white, agonised face of Mistress Dorothy, who raises her eyes and hands in mute appeal.

"There you behold a traitor!" says my lady in her deepest tones; "and—all traitors will be treated so."

Left alone in that awful darkness the girl moans and shivers a little. Then she rises, and, beating upon the hard stone walls in her terror, she cries frantically on the name of her lover. Presently she falls exhausted on the stone flags and cowers close to the wall.

Meanwhile, the hours pass, and it is the hour for the night-guard to turn out. The man who has been left to keep guard at the entrance to the dungeon is relieved at last. The fellow who takes his place is a good-natured man, but is, alas for himself! possessed

of a capacious and unruly appetite. He sets his lantern down on the flags, and then sits down against the wall.

"Christmas Eve," he grumbles, "and yet no wassail bowl, nor else beside of good cheer."

Presently the sound of footsteps causes him to spring to his feet hurriedly. But it is only Faith, Mistress Dorothy's maid.

"Good even, Mistress Faith. I ought to be wishing you a merry Christmas; but with nothing in the larder what's the use?"

"Naught at all," replies Faith, "while my young mistress is prisoned down yonder. Not but what my lady had good grounds for acting so," she adds quickly.

"Ay, ay; but a sweet, winsome young thing like her, 'tis cruel hard. Yes, I think 'tis too severe a punishment."

"Ah, now, bless your dear heart for saying it!" says Faith. "Now, for saying that so kind, what do you think I'll give ye?" She takes from a bundle she is carrying, a fine young capon, a loaf of bread, and a flagon of wine.

The man's eyes glisten at the sight. "For me?"

"Ay, 'tis all for you, surely enough, though it was meant for Father Carsum's dinner to-morrow."

"To think of the quality faring like that, when we have been without beer for a fortnight."

"Nay, you must not judge wrongly; 'tis only the priest and my lord, who is ill, who fare so well. My lady has less than any. Now, Master Timothy, do you fall to, and I will keep watch for you."

He needs no urging, and begins to eat heartily; but Faith forbears to give him any wine just yet.

"What is in the flagon, Mistress Faith?"

"Good rare wine. But it is toll for something."

"I'll earn it right quickly, if you'll tell me how."

"Then you must e'en raise the slab a little, for me to have one peep at my sweet young mistress."

But he hesitates.

"Come," urges Faith, "there will be no harm done."

Then she raises the lantern so that the light falls on the rich red colour of the wine. The temptation is too great, and prudence is thrown to the winds. He raises the slab, and rests it against the wall.

"Oh," cries Faith, in pretended dismay, "'tis so dark, I dare not look! We will try a taste of wine for courage."

She withdraws the stopper, and makes a show of drinking.

"Try it, Master Timothy; 'tis rare warm stuff."

He is not diffident, and he takes a strong pull at the flagon. Faith watches him anxiously.

"It must be weary work standing so long. Sit ye down a bit," she urges.

"Well, my legs feel uncommon tired, so, by your leave, Mistress Faith, I will rest a bit."

The soldier stretches his big form out again in his former resting-place. He still has hold of the bottle.

"Good rare stuff," he laughs; then, taking another draught, he empties the bottle. His head falls back, and he is as senseless as a log.

"Safe for four hours," murmurs Faith, watching him closely.

It is only the work of a minute to place the ladder in position, take the lantern, and descend into the dungeon.

"Mistress Dorothy! Dear mistress! See, it is Faith come to you! Don't be losing heart, dear mistress, but look up."

The sunk heap of misery lying upon the floor of the dungeon moves a little. "What is it?" comes the whisper.

"I have come to save you, mistress. Hush! We must speak low, but we must haste. You must change gowns with me, dear heart, and then you must take the lantern and haste from this place. You will go round by the west door to the gardens; no one is about, the guard has turned out, and as for my lady, it is Christmas Eve and she is in the chapel. But haste, dear mistress!"

"I do not understand you, Faith," says Dorothy wearily.

"But you must, dear lady." And all the time the nimble fingers are unfastening her young mistress's dress. "'Tis all quite safe, go the old way to the pigeon-house, and then to the left, by the moat. There's a rope knotted ready and fastened to a hook in the wall."

"But you, dear Faith?"

"I shall stay here, and they will not know that you are gone until you are safe with Master Roger."

"But, Faith, my heart misgives me. What will they not do to you? Ah! you do not know; there may be death to face. I cannot go and let aught of ill come to you."

"Nay," says the maid, "you *must*! And for me, what matters death? Did not I overhear Master Ludlow, the apothecary, telling my lady that I could not live long, not many weeks at the most? Ah! you did not know, dear lady, but I have had such a burning pain here, in my side, and in the long nights it is so dreadful to bear, often I have longed to throw myself from the Castle wall, only it were a sin. So I do not fear death, and since poor Geordie fell in the last sortie I feel that I would welcome death gladly. Now, dear mistress, go, and leave me, and if aught of ill haps to me, think of how I loved you, and think too that I shall have been spared much pain."

"Faith, truly you are one of God's dear saints! Is it right for me to go?"

"Dear one, yes! And God bless thee and help thee!"

Dorothy kisses her tenderly and then climbs up the ladder.

"Put the ladder against the wall," calls Faith softly, "then when the soldier wakes he will remember that the slab was open, and shut it without more ado to save himself from trouble."

When she reaches the top Dorothy looks back once into the

gloom, and she never forgets the look of beautiful resignation which is on Faith's face at that moment.

"God help us both!" she says to herself, as she scurries along the many passages of the castle.

When, some three hours later, Timothy rouses from his deep sleep, he glares stupidly before him. All is as it should be, save that the stone slab is out of place. Then he remembers Faith's visit.

"'Twas good rare wine," he mutters, as he holds up the lantern and peers down into the dungeon. Yes, the prisoner is safe enough; he can see the gleam of her silk dress and the white lace of the large collar round her throat. "Poor wench, poor wench!" he says as he shuts down the stone.

Early in the morning my lady comes to the dungeon with Captain Brocas and a couple of carabineers.

"I wish I had cut out my tongue before I told of her," says the Captain. "I never dreamed of such extreme measures. Dear lady, reflect, will not my lord forgive her?"

"My lord says that, although she is as our own child, justice must be done, and an example set."

"But a girl, and so young! Think on 't! No harm has been done; the paper was intercepted in time."

But Lady Faringdon's face is pale with emotion as she orders the men to remove the slab and place the ladder. Taking the lantern from Timothy she gazes into the gloom.

"Poor child, she is asleep," says Captain Brocas.

The girlish form below is lying with the face turned close to the wall.

"'Twere a pity to disturb her," says one of the men.

"My lady, if it must be done, let it be done now," urges Brocas. "For pity's sake, do not wake her! One shot and all will be over. She will know nothing, all the horrible fear will be saved her."

"My lord did not say how the deed should be accomplished," says my lady waveringly.

"Then let it be now," pleads Brocas.

"Very well," assents my lady suddenly, "as you will. Do your work now. Shoot, men!"

The men raise their carbines, but hesitate. One turns aside, sick with disgust. "God help me, I cannot shoot a sleeping maid."

"Coward!" hisses my lady.

"Hush! or she will wake," says Brocas, as he takes the man's weapon from him and takes steady aim. But the other soldier, thinking that both are to fire, pulls his trigger hastily. A puff of smoke, a report that echoes through the castle, and that is all.

"Strange," says Brocas, with a sob in his voice; but thankful that it was not his hand that sped the fatal bullet. "She never so much as quivered."

"Most mercifully sped," says my lady with trembling lips, and rising from her knees. And none of them suspect that the girl

below has been dead for more than two hours. She had been overwrought by her exertions and emotion; the deadly heart malady had completed its work and opened the door for that sweet, sacrificing spirit to escape its mortal prison.

"And the burial?" asked Captain Brocas after a pause.

"To-morrow," answers my lady.

But to-morrow all is changed. Cromwell has brought his victorious forces to Colonel Gaze's assistance, with the determination to put an end to this nest of popery which has for so long defied them, and the storming of the castle is begun in desperate earnest.

In the confusion of the terrible onslaught, in the fresh need for each and every one to exert himself to the utmost, the burial of the dead girl is an impossibility, and the body remains in the dungeon.

Within the camp of the besiegers a young girl stands before Cromwell, pleading earnestly on behalf of the brave defenders of Bastoch Castle.

"Quarter to all who ask it shall not be denied," he says curtly, "and the women and children will be spared."

But the subsequent endeavours of Dorothy and her lover to find and befriend Faith are hopeless. A neglected fireball sets the whole structure on fire, and in twenty-four hours only the blackened ruins remain to tell of the once stately edifice that had held out so long in the King's name.

* * * *

The faint dawn of a winter's morning was creeping through the slits of the Venetian blinds in Major Wedderburn's dining-room.

"Why, bless me, sir! haven't you been to bed at all?" And worthy Mrs. Benson shook her still sleeping master by the arm.

"What, what, what?" ejaculated the Major. "Bless my soul, Mrs. Benson, what brings you into the camp at this time of night? If the General hears of it, he'll court-martial me. Cromwell can't bear petticoats about him when there's work to be done."

"The camp! the General! Cromwell!" echoed Mrs. Benson, amazed.

"And that poor soul, Faith! I must get her out. And that flighty Mistress Dorothy, by Gad, she deserved to be shot, not sweet Faith."

"Master, you're not yourself, you have been dreaming."

"Dreaming? Nonsense! I tell you I've been to Bastoch Castle, and that I'll swear!" And the Major looked so ferocious, that Mrs. Benson began to tremble.

"If you'd only go to bed, sir, if 'twas only for a hour or so, you'd be better. Hark! there's the carols!" And surely enough the strains of "Noël, Noël" could be distinguished a few houses away.

"Why! Bless my soul!" cried the Major, "it is Christmas morning."

MISS CHAMPION DE POLLINAXE.

FROM the room into which I squeezed with some difficulty myself and my scanty belongings, I could see the distant woods of her ample domain. From the high road, as I drove past in the schoolroom cart, I obtained a nearer view of the picturesque house above its sloping gardens, whilst the comments and allusions of daily conversation conveyed a vivid impression of lofty and well-lighted rooms, adorned with art-treasures, slowly accumulated by the ancient and illustrious family of whom Miss Champion de Pollinaxe was now head and representative. I heard, too, of the admirable order maintained in house, gardens, and stables, without care or supervision on her part, by efficient and experienced servants, bequeathed to her with the other treasures. And all this enjoyed under such exceptional advantages. Her younger sisters, Mrs. Montague Jacques and my employer, Lady Laneton, had succeeded by marriage to homes as imposing, if not as picturesque, but with the serious drawbacks in the one case of a husband whose tastes, in the other of a family whose education, constantly interfered with their own particular preferences and plans. Miss Champion de Pollinaxe's dominion was absolute as it was serene. Altogether I imagined I saw at last in realisation the very acme of earthly felicity, and was filled with an ardent desire to inspect it more closely.

Nor did the wish seem altogether unreasonable, considering the lady's relationship to my employer. I had a right, surely, to expect she would appear at Mrs. Laneton's, with whom, I knew, she was on the most affectionate terms; but as time went on it discovered to me that Miss Champion de Pollinaxe rarely visited her sister, and then only, by some curious coincidence, when that lady happened to be at home alone.

My next hope was that, in attendance on my pupils, I might see her at her own house, where doubtless she constantly exercised the magnificent opportunities for hospitality that, more than any of her possessions, excited the envy of the humble writer, who has never been able to offer to anyone so much as a chair or a cup of tea she could call her own. But no; to my astonishment, my increasing astonishment, it became gradually plain to me that Miss Champion de Pollinaxe, so far from indulging in extravagant conviviality, did not entertain at all.

There still remained the probability of seeing her at some of the tennis meetings and other garden-parties of the neighbourhood, for in her case, even in the most exclusive of counties, there was no question whether she should be invited to any gathering of

importance. The real query was—Would she come? and it was one, I soon gathered from my own experience and the remarks of other people, that was usually answered in the negative.

All this, while naturally increasing my curiosity, seriously diminished my chance of gratifying it; and I had almost resigned my wish, when one day it was suddenly accorded, and in the simplest manner.

The rest of the family were from home when my dullest and favourite pupil announced that she would like to call that afternoon upon her "Auntie Lulu," as Miss Champion de Pollinaxe was spoken of by her nieces. The statement, under the circumstances, seemed to call for some explanation; but Alice, in her blundering way, was firm in her assertion that she had been invited to visit her aunt any day that week; and having no positive objection to offer, I gratefully accepted this stroke of good fortune, and started with my pupil in the direction of Sunningdale Manor.

The glowing heat of the day enhanced the charm of shady avenues by which we wound from the lodge towards the velvety lawns and radiant pastures of the grounds. The carriage drive swept round the main wing of the quaintly-irregular house, affording us as we drove past the tall, open windows glimpses of more than one luxuriously-fitted sitting-room. The carriage stopped before a portico, and we looked from the sunlight that beat almost oppressively upon us into the cool twilight of a tessellated hall, fragrant with the scent of grouped plants and flowers.

My pupil plunged into the house without the previous ceremony of ringing the bell. A door opened at the other end of the hall and an elderly butler announced that Miss Champion de Pollinaxe was not at home.

"Oh, yes, to me!" replied Alice confidently.

"Miss Champion de Pollinaxe is not at home," he reiterated severely. "We looked all over the house and could not find her anywhere twenty minutes ago, when Lady Oranmore called."

"Oh, bother!" was my pupil's elegant rejoinder, as without word of warning or explanation, she darted towards the broad oak staircase and tore up its steps. The butler withdrew in evident displeasure, and I pursued my charge, entreating her to return as distinctly as I could without raising my voice to an unceremonious pitch. I reached the upper landing just in time to see her skirts disappearing at one end of a long, stately corridor, oak panelled and lighted by tall windows, each framing an exquisite view of park and country.

"Alice," I exclaimed, "what are you running about the house in this wild way for? You have been told your aunt is not at home, and——"

But before I could finish my sentence she made another frantic rush through a red swing-door and up a flight of narrow stairs that landed us—for I felt bound to follow protesting—in a long, low passage of what appeared to be the attic floor.

"I desire you will come down this instant, and let us go home," I exclaimed, somewhat out of breath and out of temper too.

"I have it!" was her rejoinder. "I know where it is?"

Though the assurance was not a very respectful acknowledgment of my order, I was consoled by the pronoun which seemed to imply that the object of this unseemly chase was a cat or some other household pet, and that once it was found we might depart in peace and sanity. So with resignation I beheld her run a few steps onwards, and then, necessarily stooping, disappear through a very low door, presumably the entrance to a loft or closet.

Her cry of satisfaction instantly informed me that she had found what she sought.

Approaching the doorway I looked in. At first I was able to discern through the gloom of the ill-lighted place merely the outlines of trunks, portmanteaus and other luggage; but gradually I discerned not only Alice herself, but, to my perplexity, a little behind her, a female figure seated so low as to be almost crouching upon the floor.

But before I could ask what this meant, Alice frustrated me with the astounding exclamation:

"Why, Aunt Lulu, what are you sitting up in this stuffy hole for?"

And immediately followed the sound of another voice, silvery in tone and in accentuation meekly plaintive, which I was compelled to receive as that of Miss Champion de Pollinaxe.

"Where else can I go?" wailed this lady of broad acres, "to get away from these tiresome visitors. In this fine weather they never cease calling. If I am in any of the sitting-rooms, or even in the gardens, they catch sight of me as they drive up to the house, and then, if after that they are told I am not at home, your mother says it looks so marked. Altogether, I get no pleasure out of the summer at all, and though I hate the cold I shall be quite glad when the winter comes. Then, perhaps, I shall have a little peace."

Struck to the heart with something like remorse, I would willingly have spared her the knowledge of my presence; but with the irrepressible Alice this was impossible. But the heroic offer of her aunt to come down and give us tea I firmly and gratefully declined, and, with a severity I reserve for extreme cases, exacted from Alice that we should instantly take our leave.

I drove home with the feeling that one more illusion had been for ever dispelled.

That all is not gold that glitters is a fact not easily assimilated by one in whose lot there has not been so much as a sparkle. Fortunately, the lack of experience is sometimes supplied by an object lesson. Such was my first and last interview with Miss Champion de Pollinaxe.

A HEART HEROIC.

WHEN the new curate, the Rev. Adam Glendinning, left the pulpit, after he had occupied it for twenty minutes, he felt that his first appearance before the country congregation of St. Mary's had been a dead failure. When he ascended the steps, he had felt that he had his subject well in hand, but his wits deserted him, as they often did at a critical moment. He had bungled and stammered and made havoc of his well-thought-out sentences. In his own eyes he was debased—an object of ridicule—and when his despairing gaze fell upon the red-haired beauty in the Squire's pew and the audacious face of the schoolboy beside her, and caught the covert smile that passed between them, an almost boyish longing to fly out of the church came over him. But he resisted it, and it was with an unnatural calm that he waited in the vestry to receive the stern criticism of his vicar. But that worthy man was hurrying off his surplice and thinking of his waiting luncheon, and the sermon never entered his mind. Then, as he was going out of the door, he caught a glimpse of the pale and downcast face of his young curate, and he turned back to put a kindly, albeit patronising, hand on his shoulder.

"Tut, tut, man! Don't take it to heart; better luck next time! You lost yourself a bit; but I won't say that I did better myself in like circumstances." And he went off smiling at the picture his words conjured up.

The occupants of the Squire's carriage were not so charitable, with the exception of the good-natured Squire himself, who, when his granddaughter demurely asked him what he thought of the sermon, "hummed" and "hawed," and finally burst into a hearty laugh.

"You've got me, Meg, my dear. I never heard a word of it; but I daresay it was a very fine address. But, to tell the truth, the run with the hounds yesterday, and the day before—Where was I the day before? Oh, up at Legg's farm about the drains!—well, it made me uncommon drowsy, and I went off in a minute."

"I know you did, darling, and *snoored*. But if you had waited another moment there would have been no sleep for you to-day. It was quite exciting, I assure you. I expected every instant to see the wretched man precipitate himself over the side of the pulpit."

"Such a funk as the chap was in," put in Dick, "I thought he was going off into a fit. Did you see him stop once with his eyes jumping out of his head? By Jove, that nearly finished me!" And the boy lay back in the carriage and roared at the recollection.

"I know we were very badly behaved, Dicky," said his cousin soberly. "I felt quite ashamed of myself, and of you."

"I wasn't," said Dick stoutly. "If old Wilkes gets those sort of fellows, I'm not going to stop laughing at them. He looks pale and booky, doesn't he? Ah, he'll never come up to old Bouncer! That chap would faint if he saw a mouse, I bet, and he couldn't throw a ball straight to save his skin."

"Pooh, pooh!" said the good-natured old Squire. "How you young ones chatter! Because the lad is nervous and stumbles over his first sermon, you set him down as a ninny at once. I remember my first speech at the Hunt dinner. I got on my feet and stuttered and stammered for five minutes, and then I sat down or someone pulled me down. I made a fine fool of myself." And the Squire laughed till the tears ran down his jolly red cheeks. "Ay, it seems like yesterday. The lad will mend. We'll give him a mount and show him our wild moors. If he's one of the Southshire Glendinnings, he comes of good stock."

"I don't think he is one of the Southshire Glendinnings," said Meg.

"Of course he's not," supplemented Dick energetically. "He's from some poky little town. He was a schoolmaster or something; I heard old Wilkes talking about him. He's a muff, I know, and he's never had his leg across a horse in his life. And I thought he would have been able to take a hand at cricket now and then. I say, what a jolly shame!"

"Poor ill-used Dicky," said Meg Fernald gaily. "Why doesn't the Vicar consult you before he engages a curate? But if this poor man turns out to be a good parish priest, we must excuse his other shortcomings. Gaskell, you know, neglected the people frightfully."

"He was the best cricketer in the county," said Dick solemnly. "But I suppose you can't have everything."

"Come, come! This young man is worth a dozen of Gaskell," said the Squire genially. "I like his face. It's the face of a good lad. So none of your tricks with him, mademoiselle." He put his big hand lovingly on the grey gloved fingers of his beautiful granddaughter.

Meg shrugged her shoulders rather disdainfully.

"Don't be afraid," she said, with a little toss of her graceful head. "Callow curates are not any more to my taste than they are to Dicky's. I admire *men*, not *milksops*!"

But the very first time that the shy young man came to dine at the Hall she had the honesty to admit that he was no "callow curate." He was well up in his work, earnest and thoughtful, and keenly alive to the responsibilities of his office. But from the first she assumed a stand-off manner that was entirely foreign to Meg Fernald's usual merry friendliness with all comers. It made the reserved young parson shrink more and more into himself, and he

was relieved when at last she turned from him to the other guests. He admired her with an almost boyish wonder and awe mixed with his admiration. This bright-faced girl, with her glorious ruddy hair, emeralds claspings her white throat and gleaming among the flimsy folds of her white gown, was different from any woman he had ever seen in his twenty-seven years of hard, colourless life. She distracted his attention from the Squire's long-winded stories. His head was bent with an air of deference, but his eyes and thoughts, almost against his will, would wander to the other end of the table, where that wonderful hair seemed to gather to itself all the light in the room. And with a half sigh he envied the ease of the fox-hunting young baronet who was Meg's latest admirer.

But if the silent young curate did not shine at a dinner-party among a crowd of country magnates, he soon shone in the parish. The people, so long accustomed to lukewarm visits and sympathy, at first rather resented the newcomer's interest in their affairs; but they soon understood, and responded to his shy but eager advances with an enthusiasm that touched his heart. Sunday after Sunday friendly faces were turned up to catch the earnest words that fell, often stumbingly, from their curate's lips, and in every joy and sorrow they turned to him for sympathy.

"What did I tell you?" chuckled the old Squire triumphantly. "Didn't I say the lad had a good face? Didn't I say he was worth a dozen of the other one? Come, now!"

"He's not a bad sort of chap in his way," said Dick reflectively.

"Even," suggested Meg cynically, "though he is the most commonplace of commonplace young men, has never been on horse-back in his life, and hardly knows the difference between a cricket bat and a tennis racket!"

"By Jove, I don't believe he does," said Dick confidentially, "but I wouldn't mind giving him a few hints. There's no 'side' about him, anyway, and you can't help liking a chap who goes ram slam into things." Dick was vague but impressive. "A fellow looks a fool when he has to stand on one side, so I wouldn't mind giving him a tip or two myself."

So, unceremoniously inviting himself to tea with the curate that evening, he stood on the hearthrug with his hands behind his back and expounded on the advantages of being well up in his favourite recreations with an eloquence that amused and impressed Glendinning immensely. He was growing very fond of the out-spoken schoolboy, for his own sake, and perhaps too—though even to himself he would not acknowledge it—because there was a ring in Dick Fernal's voice now and again, a look in his frank eyes, that reminded him powerfully of the red-haired beauty who occasionally crossed his path, riding a big chestnut and clad in the shortest of habits, or in some confection of white or green that dazzled his grave eyes when, half wondering at

his own temerity he responded to some of the old Squire's hearty invitations to the Hall.

"And the meaning of all this is, Dick," he said, laughing, "that my education is not completed. I must go in for a course of tennis and other games under your tuition."

"That's the ticket," said Dick grandly. "You leave yourself in my hands, and I'll make a crack player of you before I'm done"—and then he launched out in praise of "Bouncer."

The curate looked puzzled.

"Bouncer again! Who is Bouncer?"

"Why, old Gaskell, of course—the fellow who was here before you. I christened him Bouncer, he'd such an up-and-down sort of gait—like this, you know"—and he graphically illustrated the highly original walk of the late curate. "He was the finest batter you ever saw, but he made a howling idiot of himself at the last."

"Yes," said Glendinning interestedly.

"He had the cheek to fall in love with Meg—my cousin, you know."

After a little pause Dick went on again:

"Fancy a fellow like that wanting to marry Meg!"

"It was very presumptuous."

There was rather a queer ring in the curate's voice, and Dick turned and looked at him sharply. But he was engaged in putting cream and sugar into the cups before him with the care and exactness that such an important operation required.

"It was—rather. You see, Meg isn't a bad-looking girl, you know, and of course she'll make a tip-top marriage; Lord Halton or one of those chaps."

"That is only natural," said the curate quietly. "But come, when am I to have my first lesson?"

And after Dick had gone he took himself to task for the dull ache that crept into his heart at the careless words of the schoolboy.

In an amazingly short time Glendinning made such progress in cricket and tennis that Dick was astonished and delighted and very proud of his pupil; but the curate had a greater leaning towards tennis, and for this Dick secretly scorned him, deeming cricket much the more manly game.

"We'll get Meg to come and watch us," he announced one evening, throwing up his racket and catching it.

The curate became emphatic and energetic in his expostulations.

"Not on any account, Dick. You must not bring Miss Fernald here, she would not care for it; and—and"—and then seeing the surprise in Dick's face he added diplomatically—"we are so much better by ourselves, eh?"

"Oh, well, just as you like, of course," said Dick, curious but indulgent, and regarding the whims of his friend with leniency.

But a few days after this who should appear in the tennis court but Meg herself, enchanting in her blue serge gown, and with a smile that rivalled the sun in brightness.

The curate turned upon Dick's bland face a look of eloquent reproach, as he went forward to meet her. He was hot, scarlet, and embarrassed; but Miss Fernal's manner was delightfully kind and friendly; not a trace remained of her former stiffness.

"Mr. Glendinning," she said, smiling, "let me exonerate Dicky. He distinctly told me that I was not to come here under pain of your extreme displeasure, but the spirit of perverseness took possession of me and I determined to risk it. And now I am here you will not send me away?"

"We can hardly do that, Miss Fernal."

"But," she said, smiling oddly at his downcast face, "you would prefer that I had stopped away? Come, own it!"

"No," he said, looking into her grey eyes and then quickly away, "Dick and I are honoured by your presence."

She shrugged her shoulders and laughed.

"As for that, I don't know whether Dick particularly esteems my society, but if you do"—with a mischievous glance of her bright eyes—"that is highly satisfactory."

She insisted on assuming the rôle of instructor, and deputed Dick to be critic. The shy reserved curate was plastic in her vigorous little hands. The afternoon passed like a pleasant dream, and they finished up with a merry tea in the little white drawing-room where Meg's privileged friends only were permitted to enter. Afterwards he could hardly tell which had been uppermost, happiness or misery—they were so closely allied. These meetings continued for some time, then Glendinning of his own will put an end to them. He dare no longer venture into that dangerously sweet society. The peace of his life was imperilled. With first one excuse and then another he absented himself. At last Dick walked into his little sitting-room and demanded an explanation. He was puzzled at the change in his friend's face—the haggard, restless look of one disturbed inwardly.

At last he said boldly:

"Is it Meg, Mr. Glendinning? Don't you care for her being with us? Meg is a brick, you know, and she won't mind if I give her a hint to stay away."

The curate started, and his pale face became suffused with a pained red flush. He picked up a paper-knife and fingered it nervously.

"What—what nonsense, Dick, my dear boy!"—and then he stopped, and his eyes fell before the keen searching gaze of the boy. "I'm very busy," he went on again, "and I must not neglect my work, Dick."

"I suppose not," said the boy gruffly. He turned away without another word. At the door he lingered for an instant as though there was something he wished to say; then thinking better of it he

went off, whistling a bar or two of a hunting song ; but it echoed in the curate's ears like some dirge.

A few days after this Adam Glendinning met the cousins driving through the village in their high dog-dart. The satin coat of the horse shone in the sun, the silver on the harness scintillated, and the two handsome young faces were smiling ; Dick, erect and proud, handling the reins masterfully, Meg with a white hat resting on her ruddy coils, and a big bunch of blue flowers pinned on the lapel of her fawn covert coat.

Dick took off his cap with a little shadow falling over his bright face, and a wistful inquiring look down at his friend. Meg acknowledged the curate's greeting with a slight inclination of her head, and her bright eyes coldly smiling into his seemed to call him what he so often called himself now—*Coward !*

Returning home in the evening from an unusually tiring round of visiting, Glendinning came upon one of the grooms from the Hall walking quickly up the road. When he saw the curate, he came quickly across to him and touched his cap with an anxious air.

"I beg your pardon, sir, but have you seen anything of the cart and Miss Fernald and Mr. Dick ?"

"I met them when I was going out, Smith, nearly three hours ago. They were driving towards Howsden."

"Then it's to the barracks they've gone, sir, and they ought to have been back long ago. The mare's not to be trusted at times, and it makes me feel a bit fidgety ; but the Squire thinks there's no horse borned yet that Master Dick can't manage ; but it takes muscle as well as skill when Venus gets into one of her tandrums."

Glendinning looked at him with his face slowly whitening at the thought of danger to that precious girlish life. He turned his head and listened.

"You needn't be uneasy, Smith ; I hear the dog-cart coming now."

"You're right, sir, and I'll cut across the Park so Master Dick needn't know that I have been looking for them."

Then the relieved look that had spread over the man's face gave way to an expression of concern.

"The mare's bolted," he said hoarsely. He shouted out something about the "railway gates" and ran down to meet the horse that came tearing along the hard road, the sound of her thundering hoofs urging her to increase her mad pace. As she passed the groom he sprang at the reins and missed them. The dog-cart swerved almost into the ditch and then continued on its way. The man ran after it, raising his voice in a discordant cry of "The railway gates ! For Heaven's sake stop them, Mr. Glendinning !" And then at the sight of the slight form of this young curate standing like a statue on the roadside, he flung up his arms with a gesture of despair at the forlornness of his hope.

Glendinning turned his head, The railway gates were closed,

the signals were down, and the whistle of the in-coming train sounded shrill and clear.

It seemed to Glendinning that he stood there for hours waiting till the mare came up to him with her red nostrils and mad eyes. Dick sat as steady as a rock, clutching the reins with his boyish hands, his teeth set, and his face grey and hard. Meg crouched on the seat beside him, at the whistle of the engine her courage had ebbed away. Her wide stricken eyes met those of the curate. She held out her hands with a cry that reached his heart, and all his life long never left him.

"Adam! save us!"

The time had come. He watched his opportunity, and sprang forward like a panther springing upon its prey. Frail and slight, but suddenly endowed with Heaven-sent strength, he flung himself at the mare's head. He felt himself dragged along at headlong speed; but his clasp never slackened—then he stumbled—there was a sudden stoppage—the bones seemed to be wrenched out of his body, and he remembered nothing more. When he opened his eyes he was lying on the grass at the side of the road, and Meg and Dick were hanging over him and crying like a couple of children. Close beside them Smith was holding the now conquered and drooping mare, and beyond, not a dozen yards away, the still-closed gates of the railway.

With a deep sigh he looked from one young face to the other.

"It's all right," he said faintly. "You are safe, thank God! Did I—did I"—he looked the question his trembling lips could not utter.

"You saved us," said Dick chokingly. "You flung yourself on Venus like—like old boots. It was just in the nick of time—we were going bang into the gates." And at the sickening thought the colour faded out of his lips.

"We can't thank you," whispered Meg tremulously. "We *never* can. If anything had happened, it would have killed grandfather." And then she caught him in her arms and cried out for Smith.

"It's only a twist—my arm," said Glendinning smiling. "It doesn't—matter." Then the agony in his shoulder made him sick and faint. Meg's pale, beautiful face stood out of the mist that suddenly enveloped him, then disappeared altogether.

A dislocated shoulder, a broken arm, and cuts and bruises of anything but a slight character incapacitated Glendinning for a while; but in a surprisingly short time he was going about the village again in his old way, and shrinking rather shyly from the avalanche of praise of his courage that met him on every side. Even the old Squire himself had thought the curate cold and stiff when he grasped his hand in his big one and tried to pour out his gratitude; but when Glendinning raised his eyes, there was neither coldness or stiffness in them, and the old man had called him his "dear lad," his "brave lad," till Glendinning was quite overcome.

As long as the curate was ill Meg and Dick came to see him every day, but when he grew stronger Dick came alone. She seemed to drift away from him and he let her go, though her words, "*Adam*, save us," were with him day and night. She seemed to have been transformed again into the Meg of his first acquaintance—not the Meg of his illness—and he almost regretted the returning health that had changed her, though in his heart he knew that it was best so—best for her.

He had been to see the Squire one night on parish business, and had chosen a time when he knew that the old man would be alone in his library after dinner. The matter settled, he was passing through the hall, when Dick came out of the drawing-room, and closing the door carefully behind him, came up to him and put his arm through his.

"Mr. Glendinning, were you going away without seeing us?"

"I've a meeting in the school-room, Dick, at nine. I came to see the Squire about it. We want to settle that Strangman affair."

"Bother the Strangman affair," said the boy impatiently. "You are not going to cut us like this. It's not fair to—Meg."

The curate started. The boy was looking at him fixedly. Without a word he let himself be drawn across the hall. Then Dick softly opened the drawing-room door, pushed him gently inside, and closed the door again, and, remaining outside himself, executed a few steps of a noiseless dance that would have done credit to a wild Indian.

Meg was standing on the hearthrug in her pretty white dinner-dress, her elbow was resting on the mantelpiece, and her eyes looking very soberly into the fire. Then with a little sigh she roused herself.

"Dick," she said languidly.

There was no answer, and she raised her head and saw Glendinning standing there.

"Mr. Glendinning," she said gladly. "I never heard you come in!"

She came up to him, and he took in his the hand she offered him, and looked down into her eyes silently. The crimson sprang into her cheeks, and she called him by his name again.

"Adam," she said, with a ring of joy in her tender voice. "Adam!"

Dick always declared, with much complacency, that the match between his cousin and Glendinning was of his making, and Glendinning in his teasing moods just as emphatically avers that his wife proposed to him herself. And Meg never denies it. Instead, with a flash of her eyes, she always says:

"Well, sir, and is not that the privilege of *quærens*?"

ELIZABETH M. MOON.

GOOD-BYE!

God give thee faith! who unto me hast given
Swift wing wherewith to reach the gates of Heaven—
Faith that shall pierce the densest sorrow-cloud
That may thy sky enshroud.

God give thee peace! whose blessed life has stilled
The fever of my love-dream unfulfilled—
Peace more divine and deeper come to thee
Than e'en thou broughtest me.

God give thee visions! who unto mine eyes
Hast opened spirit-scenes of Paradise—
The gates of evening open to thy sigh
To give thee dear delight.

God give thee rest! to think of whom has brought
Respite to me from many an anxious thought—
Rest that shall steal upon thy weariness,
Where through no care may press.

God give thee friends! who, more than any friend,
Hast love, light, healing given without an end.
If human sympathy withdraw or fail,
God's tenderness avail.

Lady of sorrow, gentle human heart,
Lady of loneliness, who dwell'st apart
In lofty solitudes, yet to our grief
Dost bend and bring relief!

The tender touch of that dear sacrament
Of kind farewell with every pulse is blent.
(Oh, life, beat true! The blessing of her love
Descendeth from above.)

Good-bye, good-bye! The years shall come and go,
Blossom succeed the whiteness of the snow;
Each changing season ever bring to me
Some semblance sweet of thee.

Good-bye! We go upon our several ways,
Each to fulfil the number of the days,
Till o'er Death's waters, on the timeless shore,
I join thee evermore!

ELIZABETH GIBSON.

THE GARDEN OF SLEEP.

"Let me sleep this night away,
Till the dawning of the day;
Then at th' opening of mine eyes
I and all the world shall rise."—*Herrick.*

SHELLEY speaks in "Adonais" of the "light of laughing flowers" spread along the grass in that green spot amid the ruins of Rome where Keats was laid to rest. Even such a light have the poets themselves shed upon the grave. The very terms of its designation are those of poetry. The cemetery, the sleeping-place of the Greeks; "Beth-haim," the House of the Living, as it is named of the Jews; "God's Acre," of which Longfellow writes:

"I like that ancient Saxon phrase, which calls
The burial-ground God's Acre! It is just;
It consecrates each grave within its walls
And breathes a benison o'er the sleeping dust."

Scarcely less beautiful than Shelley's description of that field in Rome, on which the band of strangers

"Have pitched in heaven's smile their camp of death,"

is his picture of an English churchyard (Lechlade, Gloucestershire) as it appeared to him one summer evening, when sunset's ray still lingered in the clear wide twilight and all, in earth and heaven alike, was peace and stillness; while the "dim and distant spire" dwindled up from amid its gleaming pinnacles till it was lost among the stars and clouds above. The winds barely moved the grass under the church-tower by which the poet stood surrounded by the sleeping dead, and a thrilling stir, "half sense, half thought," seemed to breathe from the quiet beds around and mingle with the hush of night. Shelley's youthful heart responded to the spell. He mused:

"Thus solemnised and softened, death is mild
And terrorless as this serenest night.
Here could I hope, like some inquiring child
Sporting on graves, that death did hide from human sight
Sweet secrets, or beside its breathless sleep
That loveliest dreams perpetual watch did keep."

In striking contrast to Shelley's pensive strain is the blithe song in which Dr. George Macdonald describes a Scottish kirkyard:—

"Oh! the bonny, bonny dell, whaur the kirkyard lies
A' day and a' nicht luiken up to the skies;
Whaur the sheep wauken up i' the simmer nicht,
Tak' a bite and lie doon, and await the licht;

Whaur the psalms roll ower the grassy heaps ;
 Whaur the win' comes and moans, and the rain comes and weeps ;—
 Whaur my Jeanie's no lyin' in a' the lair,
 For she's up and awa' up the angels' stair !
 Oh, the bonny, bonny dell, whaur the kirkyard lies,
 Whaur the stars luik doon, and the nicht-wind sighs."

It is a beautiful idea, that the body's last resting-place should suggest something of the peacefulness and beauty of that Paradise to which the spirit has won.

"Bright be the place of thy soul !"

says Byron to one whose loveliness of spirit had impressed him with the certainty of that spirit's Divine origin. And then, as if in echo to that supreme desire for the spirit's welfare, there follows the slighter aspiration :

"Light be the turf of thy tomb !
 May its verdure like emeralds be :
 There should not be the shadow of gloom
 In aught that reminds us of thee.

"Young flowers and an evergreen tree
 May spring from the spot of thy rest :
 But nor cypress nor yew let us see,
 For why should we mourn for the blest?"

Herrick overflows with these pretty fancies of the grave. Here is one :

"UPON PRUE, HIS MAID.
 In this little urn is laid
 Prudence Baldwin, once my maid,
 From whose happy spark here let
 Spring the purple violet."

A fancy, that of violets springing from the grave, to which Shakespeare gave the clue in the lines where Laertes says of his sister, Ophelia :

"Lay her i' the earth ;
 And from her fair and unpolluted flesh
 May violets spring !"

Tennyson pleases himself with the thought that from his friend's ashes may be made

"The violet of his native land."

Again Herrick sings :

"UPON A CHILD.
 Here a pretty baby lies
 Sung asleep with lullabies ;
 Pray be silent, and not stir
 The easy earth that covers her.

And yet again, weaving a thought of Heaven into his verse :

“UPON A MAID.

Hence a blessed soul is fled,
Leaving here the body dead ;
Which, since here they can't combine,
For the saint, we'll keep the shrine.”

The same thought illumines James Shirley's Epitaph “Upon M. E. S.”:

“If, to maintain the use, I must
Say ‘here lies,’—Here lies the dust
Of one, that added to the graces,
Whose memory no death defaces,—
Not she herself—to Heaven flown ;
Earth hath nothing but her own :
She cannot be, it is most true,
Here, and in Heaven an angel too.”

What a radiance do these lines from the play of “King John and Matilda” by one of Lamb's old dramatists, Robert Davenport, shed on the tomb :

“Matilda, now go take thy bed
In the dark dwellings of the dead ;
And rise in the great waking-day,
Sweet as incense, fresh as may.”

Then, with a sudden flight from body to soul, from earth to Heaven :

“Rest there, chaste soul, fix'd in thy proper sphere,
Amongst Heaven's fair ones ; all are fair ones there.”

The same antithesis is indulged by Browning, in one of his best-known poems, only he follows the soul's flight first :

“Waft of soul's wing !
What lies above ?
Sunshine and Love,
Sky-blue and Spring !
Body hides—where ?
Ferns of all feather,
Mosses and heather,
Yours be the care !”

George Herbert, triumphing in the supreme light cast on the once “dark dwellings of the dead,” exclaims :

“Therefore we can go die as sleep, and trust
Half that we have
Unto an honest faithful grave,
Making our pillows either down or dust.”

“Half that we have !” But it is too large an allowance. Again

it is the genial human Herrick who brings the comfort nearer home, in one of his epitaphs "Upon Himself":

"Some parts may perish, die thou canst not all;
The most of thee shall 'scape the funeral."

The flowers, in their gay apparel, white, blue, yellow and red, smile up at us from the graves over which we bend in our sombre black; the green sod seems to invite us also to rest, and the birds to sing to us of a Heaven above the heaven through which they flit. Whittier moves us to hope through the sweet, unreproachful pleading of these dumb preachers:

"O fearful heart and troubled brain!
Take hope and strength from this,—
That nature never hints in vain,
Nor prophesies amiss.

"Her wild birds sing the same sweet stave,
Her lights and airs are given
Alike to playground and the grave;
And over both is Heaven."

But of the grave itself the little ones, as Shelley says, will make a playground. Landor, gentle always with children as with flowers, addresses "Children playing in a Churchyard":

"Children, keep up that harmless play;
Your kinder angels plainly say,
By God's authority, ye may.

"Be prompt His holy word to hear,
It teaches you to banish fear:
The lesson lies on all sides near."

There is no more familiar figure in poetry than that of Wordsworth's little rustic maiden, in the poem "We are Seven," seated singing, or knitting, or else supping out of her little porringer, by the graves of her small brother and sister, whom she cannot by any force of reasoning be brought to think of as having dropped by the mere accident of death out of the family circle. Beside this childish image may be set the venerable figure of the aged Joanna Baillie, who writes from Hampstead to her old friend and contemporary, Miss Berry, "For me, the walking through our churchyard is no unpleasant thing; it cannot extinguish the lights beaming from the promised house in which are many mansions."

"He spake well," writes Longfellow, "who said that graves are the footprints of angels." This thought, of angelic care for the places of our last repose, occurs in those poets even who are not given to mysticism. It is Pope who writes of the sad fate of a lady who died amid strangers in a foreign land:

"Yet shall thy grave with rising flowers be drest,
And the green turf lie lightly on thy breast:

There shall the morn her earliest tears bestow,
There the first roses of the year shall blow ;
While angels with their silver wings o'ershade
The ground, now sacred by thy relics made."

So, too, Gray, in a stanza which originally preceded the Epitaph in his "Elegy," but which he afterwards omitted :

"There scattered oft, the earliest of the year,
By hands unseen are showers of violets found ;
The redbreast loves to build and warble there,
And little footsteps lightly print the ground."

Christina Rossetti's thoughts loved to hover about the grave. Its peace, its quietness had for her an irresistible attraction. Of the resting-place of one (in her poem "Sound Sleep") she tells how the wild flowers creep round it, and the lark and thrushes keep for it their song ; how the fresh wind blowing through the leaves at evening brings to it the far-off chimes of church-bells :

"Night and morning, noon and even,
Their sound fills her dreams with Heaven."

George Meredith asks :

"Into the breast that gives the rose
Shall I with shuddering fall?"

A fancy which has been exquisitely elaborated by Victor Hugo in his little poem "*La Tombe et la Rose*," of which not all the charm can evaporate even in a prose translation :

"The grave said to the rose : 'What doest thou, flower of love, with the tears dawn sheds on thee?'"

"What doest thou, dark grave," said the rose, "with that which falls into thy ever-open mouth?"

The rose said : "Those tears of dawn, I turn in the shadow to a perfume of amber and honey."

The grave said : "And I, O plaintive flower, of everyone that comes to me I make an angel of heaven."

It is often the very exuberance of renewed life in spring that brings the bitterest pang to the heart. The grass grows green, the daisies shine upon the grave. Kind nature restores earth's bloom after the ravages of winter, and morning brings back light and beauty to the darkened landscape :

"But when shall spring visit the mouldering urn?
O when shall it dawn on the night of the grave?"

Thus sighs the Hermit of James Beattie's once celebrated poem. He calls on that "sweetest complainer," the nightingale, mourning the transient cessation of her joy, to mourn instead for man, whose pleasures pass away like hers, but never to return. He marks the half-extinguished moon disappearing on the verge of the sky, in

which she had lately shined in glory. Her path will conduct her again to splendour :

"But man's faded glory what change shall renew?
Ah fool! to exult in a glory so vain."

But he hearkens to the whispers of divine hope within him. He prays the "Father of Light" to pity His creature, and to deliver him from doubt and darkness, until at last, his war with himself and nature over, he resumes the strain and resolves it into peace :

"And darkness and doubt are now flying away,
No longer I roam in conjecture forlorn.
So breaks on the traveller, faint and astray,
The bright and the balmy effulgence of morn.
See Truth, Love, and Mercy, in triumph descending,
And nature all glowing in Eden's first bloom!
On the cold cheek of death smiles and roses are blending,
And Beauty immortal awakes from the tomb."

Lines which are here quoted less for the sake of their own old-fashioned pensive grace than because, as Boswell relates, they drew tears from the eyes of Dr. Johnson.

What more beautiful definition of the grave could there be than Chaucer's "the green pathway to Life," or than Bunyan's "The chamber whose name is Peace." Or, to give the whole passage, where the author, who for the most part ignores the tomb, says of one of his wayfarers, "The Pilgrim they laid in a chamber whose windows opened towards the sunrising. The name of that chamber was Peace, where he slept till the break of day."

It is the rays of sunset Moore craves for his Irish exile :

"Oh! make her a grave where the sunbeams rest
When they promise a glorious morrow."

Flowers and birds, the rustle of leaves in the wind, the music of children's voices, the beams of sun and moon and star—these are pleasant accompaniments to the rest we look forward to when, tired out at last, we lay our heads upon the lap of earth. But it is not always in the flower-grown, bird-haunted cemetery, in the peaceful churchyard, that we find a grave. Not all of us can "wrap the thought of our last bed in our childhood's daisies." Some must even fail of the ritual of the dead, breathing its soothing hopes of a joyful resurrection.

But, after all, it is the life, and not the death with its attendant solemnities, that helps the parted soul.

"Denied Christian burial? I pray, what does that?" cries a speaker in one of John Webster's plays. The dead march, "the flattery in the epitaphs" ("Where do they bury the bad people?" asked child Elia, reading the tomb-stones with his sister Mary) :

"What do these
Add to our well-being after death?"

And he concludes, with a faith that triumphs over all faith's outward forms :

"What care I then though my last sleep
Be in the desert or in the deep,
No lamp nor taper, day and night,
To give my charnel chargeable light?
I have like quantity of ground,
And at the last day shall be found."

"Fortunately, God knows where to look for a soul," says Victor Hugo.

"The whole earth is the Father's, and any corner of our Father's home is good enough to die in," declares Samuel Rutherford, one of those "noble believers" to whom, as to Sir Thomas Browne, the soul's continued existence being "not only a hope, but an evidence," "it is all one to lie in St. Innocent's Churchyard, as in the sands of Egypt."

So also says Herrick, though with an underlying regard, as be seemed his clerical profession, to funeral obsequies, in his injunction :

"TO THE PASSENGER.

"If I lie unburied, sir,
These, my relics, pray inter ;
'Tis religion's part to see
Stones or turfs to cover me.
One word more I had to say,
But it skills not ; go your way ;
He that wants a burial-room,
For a stone has Heaven his tomb."

"True it is," says Fuller, even while commending the custom or solemn interment, "bodies flung in a bog will not stick there at the day of judgment ; cast into a wood, will find out the way, thrown into a dungeon, will have free egress ; left on the highway, are still in the ready road to the resurrection."

It seems sweeter indeed to lie with kindred dust, whither familiar feet may wend, where hands once familiar to the clasp may touch the grass upon the grave :

"To rest beneath the clover sod,
That takes the sunshine and the rains,
Or where the kneeling hamlet drains
The chalice of the grapes of God."

But it is not into these green garden-beds that our dear ones pass out of our sight. We know they are not there, even while we cling to the spot which the very suggestion of their presence suffices to sanctify and endear. So Christina Rossetti ponders ; and she bids us—

"Weep not ; O friends, we should not weep :
Our friend of friends lies full of rest ;
No sorrow rankles in her breast,
Fallen fast asl.ep.

"She sleeps below,
 She wakes and laughs above;
 To-day, as she walked, let us walk in love;
 To-morrow follow so."

All paths lead to this Garden of Sleep. In one of Dr. George Macdonald's poems a child asks of a traveller what lies over the hill towards which he gazes from his nursery window. And the traveller tells him of the valleys and brooks, of the towns and moors, the rocks and sands and seas that lie beyond. "And is that all?" asks the child. "Have you told the best?"—

"No, neither the best nor the end.
 On summer eves, away in the West,
 You will see a stair ascend,

"Built of all colours of lovely stones—
 A stair up in the sky"—

a stair the steps of which are very steep, but down which a Hand will be reached to help our ascent, and that leads to a place where neither sickness nor grief nor weariness of life can ever come near us again.

PAULINE W. ROOSE.



CHRISTMAS, 1899

"Ibunt de virtute in virtutem : videbitur Deus deorum in Sion."
 Psalm lxxxiv. 7.

GREETING, friends, another Christmas greeting,
 Still we follow on the unknown way—
 On and up! No pause and no retreating!
 Blest with glimpses of a brighter day.

Often weary of the strain, the striving,
 Sometimes lonely on the windswept height;
 Yet not doubting that at last arriving,
 We shall enter into rest and light.

JOHN JERVIS BERESFORD, M.A.

